# HINDU PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

R.N. VYAS

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## THE BOOK

In the West, religion and philosophy have been kept in separate compartments. But in India, both have been synthesised like water and milk or cloth and its threads. That is why Dharma has its peculiar nature. It ennobles life and helps in seeking liberation.

The present work happens to be the first systematic account of Philosophy of Dharma. One may term it, if one likes, The Hindu View of Philosophy of Religion.

The worth and utility of the work can be realized only after a perusal of its contents. It is bound to be quite rewarding both to an individual as well as human society.

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# Preface

I feel pleasure in presenting this volume before the learned readers.

The modern man has to face many problems. The present age has not only brought astounding progress of science, it has also brought undreamt-of problems in its wake. Spatial distance has been shortened, but mental distance has been widened. Family peace has been disturbed. A gulf has sprung between parents and children, husband and wife; the art of adjustment has been forgotten. A person has become stranger in his own family. The case of society is not different. Selfishness, divisiveness non- co-operation, disrespect to morality and such other tendencies have become dominant. Politics has become the stronghold of the crooked. Religion has been depraved into religionism. As J.Krishnamurti has declared "Religion, traditions, institutions, dogmas, books prophets are of no value to the self."

It appears that the world is moving towards ever-increasing darkness. Where the 'developed' nations are busy in sinking their money in the preparation of deadly weapons instead of utilizing it to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, where the society is abounding in business of food and drug adulteration, where religion is being utilized to hoodwink the

credulous, and where everybody is running blindly to grab the pleasures of body alone, the things are bound to worsen day after day.

And yet I am not pessimistic. Darkness can be removed and light can be brought both in the homes and society, if we take the help of dharma. Dharma is more than what is meant by the usual term religion. Religion has been reduced to ritualism. But dharma cannot be conceived without the soul. India is a big and old nation. It has been able to survive the historical upheavals only because of its concept of Dharma. Dharma has no sectarian god to please. From the very beginning, Indian thinkers tried to know.

"Who gives life's breath and is of strength to the giver,
At whose behest all gods act obedient,
Whose shadow is immortality and likewise death-
What god shall we rever with our oblation? "(Rigveda 10. 121)

And they came to know that the Purusa (the Supreme all-pervading Being) is the only God who deserves our worship. The description of the Purusa is symbolic. According to the Purusa Sukta "Purusa has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, and a thousand feet. On every side enveloping the earth, he trans-cended it by a space of ten fingers. Purusa Himself is this whole, whatever has been and whatever shall be. He is also the lord of immortality, since through food he expands. Such is His greatness; and Purusa is superior to this. All existing things are a quarter of Him. With three quarters, Purusa mounted upwards. A quarter of Him again was produced here below. He then became diffused everywhere among things animate and inanimate..."

The Atharveda calls this Purusa Brahma and in a hymn on Skambha and Brahma describes Brahma in the following words:

"Reverence to that greatest Brahma, who presides over the past, the future, the universe, and whose alone is the sky. These worlds, the sky and the earth, exist supported by Skambha. Skambha is all this which has soul, which breathes, which winks. That which moves, flies, stands, which has existed breathing, not breathing and winking; that omniform entity has established the earth: that combined is one only....I regard as the greatest."



The Upanisads call this very Supreme Being the Atman or the Brahman. The Mundaka Upanisad describes this Brahman in the following words:

"Self-luminous Brahman, ever present in the heart of all. He is the refuge of all. He is the supreme goal. In him exists all that moves and breathes. In him exists all that is. He is both that which is gross and that which is subtle. Adorable is He. Beyond the ken of the senses is He. Supreme is He."

In the Manisa Pancaka, Sankaracharya has declared.

"He who has learnt to see the one Existence everywhere, he is my master-be he Brahmin or Candala"

Dharma thus teaches us to see one Real throughout the universe. It demolishes the walls of separation and disharmony because, it knows in the words of the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad that the Infinite (the universe) emanates from the Infinite (Brahman.)

The Bhagavadgita expresses the quintessence of dharma when it writes:

"Seeling all things equal,
The enlightened may look
On the Brahmin, learned and gentle,
On the cow, on the elephant,
On the dog, on the eater of dogs."

Dharma makes a person a moral superman. This moral supermanness comes from an intense love for God. A follower of dharma is a devotee, a Bhakta for whom the God is the be-all and end-all of life. His love for God transcends the attachment for any relation or worldly thing.

The term dharma cannot be translated correctly by calling it a religion. Religion has ritualism, but dharma is beyond it. If it has to be translated in English, we can call it

spiritual religion to distinguish it from other so-called religions which are limited to certain limitations. If there were no limitation, then the adherents of one religion would not fight with the adherents of other religions in the name of religion. Unity of religions can be found only in spiritual religion because there is no division in spirit. Religion can be a sustaining principle only if it is spiritual in nature. This is clear from the very meaning of the term dharma. Only when one understands dharma, one can perceive the short comings of religions, which act only as opium and mislead people all over the world. At present we have enough religion to hate and badly need a religion that can teach us to love honestly and sincerely. The individual man must exist for the eternal Purusa i.e. the Supreme and must express Him in disinterested works in science and philosophy, in literature and arts, in service and worship. Dharma is

> 'The light whose smile kindles the universe,
> That beauty in which all things work and move.'

Such a Dharma can eliminate greed, oppression etc. and shall prove satisfying both socially as well as individually. Only Dharma can inspire people to declare

> 'Our minds will form a plan
>
> To draw man unto man.'

Dharma never fails. If we protect Dharma, the latter shall protect us. Dharma alone can lead us out of darkness that envelopes mankind in the form of atomic weapons and the 'insane' acts of heads of states and societies.

Rightly warns the poet

> 'No auguring mind can doubt that deeds which root
> In steadfast purpose only, will effect
> Dliverance from a world calamity
> As dark as any in the vaults of Time.'

The present work presents the nature of Dharma free from the taint of sectarian outlook. Indian mind from the very beginning had a faith that only the infinite can give real happiness (ya bhuma tadaiva sukham). Indians have a noble



mind and a noble heart. Vision of the Atman has given them that breadth in thinking which detests every type of pettiness.

I am sure that the perusal of the present work shall prove quite rewarding to its readers.

I thank the publishers for undertaking its publication.

**R.N. VYAS**

# Contents

# 1

# Indian Concept of Religion

Religion is the oldest social institution. But the concept of religion differs from society to society and from individual to individual. We do not come across any definition of religion acceptable to one and all. The popular view about religion has been expressed by the Chamber's twentieth Century Dictionary, when it gives the meaning of the term religion as:

> "belief in, recognition of, or an awakened sense of, a higher unseen controlling power or powers, with the emotion and morality connected therewith."[1]

Usually, when one thinks about religion, a group of things like a temple, church, prayer, sermon, ritual etc. comes to one's mind. But it is not rational to consider these things as the essence of religion. If outward rituals and ceremonies are considered to be the essence of religion, then we have no right to talk about one religion. How can we forget that there are differences in the ceremonies of Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and other religions? But the moment we try to ponder over the matter, we realize that there must be some common feature underlying the different creeds that makes them religion. Just as the perfume of a rose flower is different from the perfume of a lotus flower, yet their perfumes have the common quality of affecting our nose in a pleasant manner, in the same way, Hinduism or Christianity

or Islam and other religions are called religion because each of these determines a definite attitude towards life. Religion is, therefore, essentially an attitude towards life affecting one's life and conduct. That is why, even Marxism, which denies God and soul, has been termed religion by George Bernard Shaw.

In the past, every society was separated because of difficulties of communication and conveyance. Under the circumstances, every society developed certain specific marks of distinction and angularities. Hence, every religion that developed in that society contained some distinctive features. The result was that common man who lacked clarity of thought considered every religion to be separate and distinct. But actually the difference found in every religion was due to the influence of social and environmental conditions.

Unfortunately, the usual human tendency is to dwell more upon the ritualistic aspect of religion, which is bound to be different due to the influence of the distinct social atmosphere, than on the real non-different element present in every religion.

For example, the peculiar social and geographical conditions of Europe are different from the social and geographical conditions of the Middle East and those of India. To what extent social and geographical conditions influence religion becomes clear when we find that even one religion, for example, Buddhism assumes a distinctive character in Ceylone, Burma, Indo China, China, Korea and Japan. The envelope appears to be the same, but contents are different to a great extent. Buddha preached the gospel of total non-violence. But the Buddhists of China do not mind taking meat and even drinking.

Even in a single nation one religion develops distinctive features in course of time. For example, let us compare the Hinduism of the Vedic period with the Hinduism of the Gupta Period, Moghul Period and British Period. We shall not find any uniformity. There is nothing under the Sun that does not undergo a change with the passage of time; and the outward form of a religion is not an exception to this rule.



If one goes by the outward form of religion alone, one shall have to accept that one religion does not exist. We have only religions before us and we cannot talk legitimately about one religion. But despite differences of time and details, we do talk about human history in the sense that the entire history is the history of human clan. We can talk in the same sense about the history of religion. It is to be noted that diversity existing amongst the individuals and the states is far more widespread than the diversity existing in religions. Religions at least accept that there is only one God who created the universe, sustains it and manages it. He alone deserves our allegiance. Can we find such a thing in the case of the states? Every state thinks itself quite sovereign. Hence, it is more rational to dwell on the constitutive authentic element of religion than to talk about the diversity of the outward frames of religions.

It is very necessary to find out the real nature of religion because many conflicts and wars have been waged in the name of religion as per the testimony of human history. European history tells us that a war lasting for one hundred years was fought between the followers of Christianity and those of Islam. Although Marx expresses the view that economic factor is the only factor behind all the wars, our rational judgement tells us that so-called religion has been responsible for many conflicts and wars. In our recent history we have seen that India was partitioned in the name of religion. Because of the atrocities committed in the name of religion we can call it the opium of people at times.

But really speaking Marx's condemnation of religion is the condemnation of the outward content i.e. ritualism. Most of the people confuse religion with its ceremonies and ritualism. Most of the people think that religion is nothing but going on pilgrimages, visiting temples and doing such outward things. This confusion exists even in our intellectual age. The Mahábharat has very aptly stated that the essential nature of religion, its being, is hidden in a cave (dharmasya tatavam nihitam guhayam). It cannot be perceived easily. Ninety nine percent of people while talking and fighting for religion has no clear idea about religion or has a dis-

torted view thereof. It is evident from their behaviour. A person who understands the real character of religion never behaves in the wild manner in which the so- called followers of religion behave. Infact these ignorant people trample over the spirit of religion and try to murder it because of their ignorance. They say that the path of hell is paved with good intentions. The things can be improved only when the real nature of religion is grasped. There is no immortality without knowledge (rite jnanat na muktih), there is no proper religious conduct without an understandings of the real nature of religion.

But how can the real nature of religion be grasped? Only by making a sincere effort to understand it. Sincere effort in this direction means not being influenced by the childish opinion of the masses, not being swayed by the interpretations of the priests, pandits and mullahas. An ordinary person is easily swayed by the popular notion of religion, because firstly, he is lazy and does not like to consult those works and persons who have the capacity to explain the real nature of religion; and secondly, he is afraid to oppose the public opinion, even if it appears to be wrong, because he thinks it advisable to be on good terms with his fellow-beings. Any opposition of the public opinion is fraught with danger, because people have a tendency of being ruthless with their opponents. The examples of Socrates, Christ, Dayanand Saraswati and Gandhi are pointers in this direction. An ordinary person is mainly interested in leading a life in a smooth manner. He may at times talk about religion. But he is rarely serious about his love for religion. In fact, if religion becomes an obstacle in his usual temporal life, he shall like to discard it totally. Sometimes superstition and blind tradition also do not allow him to know the truth. We should not forget that superstition is most intolerant and blind. The result is that he fails to have a vision of real religion.

## MEANING OF RELIGION

The best way of understanding religion is to peep into its etymological meaning. The term religion is derived from the



verb 'religare' meaning 'to bind'. Thus, the term religion implies something that binds. Understood logically, it is the process that binds the self with the Supreme. Fundamentally, therefore, religion must be understood in this sense alone. It must prove a binding force. When one binds oneself with the Supreme, one becomes as lofty as God. One's personality becomes so enlarged that the whole cosmos becomes a small part of his Being. In Sanskrit, the term usually used for religion is Dharma. The term 'dharma' is derived from the root 'dhri' meaning 'to support'. Thus, 'dharma' is the supporting principle of one's being and the existence of the universe. Dharma is that principle which gives the quality of all-comprehensiveness, all-inclusiveness to the self, because to give littleness or smallness to the self is to destroy the real nature of the self. The Bhagavadgita tells us that one must realize this fact that one is an indivisible whole, the universe itself.[2] This experience of being the whole (purnamidam) supports the soul. If the self forgets this sense of being the whole, nothing but agony, anguish and suffering shall be felt. Why do we need religion? We need religion, dharma, because there is an inherent yearning in every individual to transcend his limited being, to attain the real dimension of his being. We all want to march from mortality to immortality, from darkness of ignorance to the light of enlightenment, from disunity to unity and indivisibility, from suffering to freedom, from agonies to attainment of bliss. If one is content with one's present lot, its suffering, agonies, anxieties etc., one need not enter the portals of religion. But man is inherently the soul, whose very nature is bliss and enlightenment. Hence, there is a craving for regaining the lost divinity.

The outward rituals are easily mistaken for real religion, which is in fact the way of recreating our ordinary being, because their acceptance does not demand any serious thinking and can be followed by almost all, thus, giving their followers an internal confidence that the sanction of the whole community is on their side. Outward rituals are, therefore, blindly followed by the adherents of religion i.e. a religious sect. Any follower of different rituals is supposed to be an

enemy or undeveloped person, who does not subscribe to a particular set of rituals. It is declared that the religion is in danger. Human rationality shall take some more time to ripen. Till then the blind traditions shall continue to rule the roost.

Let us take an example to see how rationality is not allowed to assert itself. The scientists all over the world are aware of the fact that the nuclear weapons shall destory their own people too in case of nuclear war, because wind shall not make any distinction between one set of people and the other set of people and shall carry destruction everywhere, and yet their traditional thinking forces them to feel that their nuclear weapons shall destroy their enemies alone. In the domain of religion this irrational thinking is so strong that sometimes we wonder whether the so-called followers of religion are serious about their religious declarations and religious works at all. If there is only one God and everybody is His creation, how can one distinguish between a 'momin' (faithful follower) and a 'kafir' (a non-acceptor of Islam)? Why should there be any cruelty or oppression over the non-believers of Islam at all? A lack of toleration is in fact a sign of irreligion. Religion is essentially a matter of not only faith but even of conduct and behaviour. Merely declaring 'I follow religion' shall not make any person religious. His entire conduct must speak that he follows religion. Conduct expresses the reality present in one's mind. Religion consists in bringing about total transformation of the entire outlook of life. Moreover, this transformation should free one's mind from the ego and the egoistic absurdities. So long as the ego is present, a person cannot be said to be religious in the true sense of the term, because the ego is the mark of irreligion, it is the sign of separateness from the Supreme who is the sole Reality. The sense of ego conceals the unity and oneness that is present in the Supreme. An illustrious philosopher of India, 'Sankara, has stated that ignorance not only hides the nature of Truth, it projects multiplicity and the manifold on the Truth, which is one in the sense that it is the only existent, the sole Reality. When we term the Supreme as one, we do not mean that there is some 'other' too. The term one is an indication of our inability forced by language on us. That is why the Real is also described as the 'a-dvitiya' i.e. non-dual in character. If the truth is non-dual, the 'I' is also non-distinct from it. But the trouble with the term 'I' is that dialectically it implies 'you' or the other. That is why whoever is swayed by the feeling of 'I' cannot avoid the existence of the other. But once we posit the other, the real nature of Truth slips away from our hands. Hence, religion is an attempt to discard the 'I' and to realize the nondual Real i.e. to experience the existence of the Real alone. Every religious sect tries to present the sence of oneness in its followers. But it usually succeeds in helping a follower to see the unity of his co-religionists alone. Therefore, one has to transcend the barriers of religious sects to attain the ultimate objective of religion viz., experience of unity with the Real.



### GRADUAL REALIZATION OF THE REAL

As the natural growth is from plurality to duality and from duality to oneness, we find that rationally speaking those religions or sects are relatively crude which believe in multiplicity of gods or the presence of the Hindu God, Christian God or Muslim God. For the right thinker, how can there be different gods ? Those sects are comparatively higher which believe in the existence of mind and matter or good and evil or God and Shaitan. But the highest religion is that which believes only in the existence of one truth pervading the whole cosmos, and even transcending it. Bernard Shaw is, therefore, right when he states that there is only one religion though there are a hundred versions of it. When one comprehends that religion, one exclaims, 'Aham Brahmasmi' (I am the Supreme), 'Tat tvam asi' (That thou art), 'Neha nanasti kimcana' (there is no multiplicity).

But we should note that this 'I' is not the petty ego that is the centre of wordly activities and that binds us in so many ways and creates conflicts and anxieties in life. Here the 'I' is the Supreme, the Real, the eternal Being, free from sorrows and pains of every discription. when one rises to this type of religion, one does not attempt to know God through any proofs. Cosmological, teleological, ontological, moral

and such other arguments that are produced are only for those who have not realized the real nature of religion. Just as one does not need any proof for one's existence, in the same way one does not need any proof of God, when one imbibes the real nature of religion, because God is non-different from one's real Being.

When one attains this state, one declares like the 'Svetasvatara Upanisad:

Filled with Brahman are the things we see;
Filled with Brahman are the things we see not;
From out of Brahman floweth all that is;
From Brahman all-yet is He the same.[3]

The celebrated Bhagvadgita describes the state of such a being in the following words:

His heart is with Brahman
His eye in all things
Sees only Brahman
Equally present,
Knows his own Atma
In every creature,
And all creation
Within that Atma.[4]

Or, one may feel like Aurbindo who writes in his poem 'Surrender':

O Thoum who I am the instrument,
O secret Spirit and Nature housed in me,
Let all my mortal being now be blent
In Thy still glory of divinity.
I have given my mind to be dug Thy channel mind,
I have offered up my will to be Thy will:
Let nothing of myself be left behind
In our union mystic and unutterable."[5]

Swami Vivekananda, who had realized Truth in his life, rightly depicts the state of mind in the highest flight of religion:

"There is no feeling of I, and yet this mind works, desireless, free from restlessness, objectless, bodiless. Then the Truth shines in its full effulgence, and we know outselves - for samadhi lies potential in us all-for what truly we are, free, immortal, omnipotent, loosed from the finite, and its contrasts of good and evil altogether, and identical with the Atma or Universal Soul."



After the attainment of the religious objective, man becomes Universal Man. He feels "Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion." Distinctions of every kind and description are resolved into the experience of one Truth. Rumi, therefore, rightly declares:

"What is to be done, O Muslims? for I do not recognise myself.
I am neither Christian nor Jew nor Gabr nor Muslim

I am not of the east, nor of the west, nor of the land, nor of the sea
I am not nature's mist nor of the cycling heavens.
I am not of earth, nor of water, nor of air, nor of fire....
I am not of India, nor of China, nor of Bulgaria, nor of Saq-sin..."

The wise sage of the Brhadaranyaka, Yajnavalkya, put the matter succinctly when he stated:

"As long as there is duality, one hears the other, one smells the other, one speaks the other, one thinks of the other, one knows the other; but when for the illumined soul the all is dissolved in the Self, who is there to be seen by whom, who is there to be smelt by whom, who is there to be heard by whom, who is there to be spoken by whom, who is there to be thought by whom, who is there to be known by whom?"[6]

One feels the sweep of immortality and says:

If the red slayer thinks he slays
Or if the slain thinks he is slain
They know not the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.[7]

It is not possible to attain this height of spiritual ex-

perience all of a sudden. Continuous and constant effort is needed for the purpose. Merely by visiting a temple or a mosque or a cathedral or anything else of the kind, one cannot become religious in the true sense of the term. Mass blindness cannot lead to the real objective. Personal effort is absolutely necessary. Outward rituals may act as an incentive at times. But if they are taken as the be-all and end-all of religious life, one is lost for ever. The Upanisads call such persons commitor of suicide (atmahano janah).

We can describe the gradual growth of religious realization in the following manner:

(1) Participation in usual religious rituals of family and society like visiting a shrine, church etc. and listening to preaching.

(2) Staying away from these rituals and giving more importance to reflection about the Real.

(3) Concentration on the Truth discovered through self-contemplation.

(4) Trying to lead a sublimated life in the light of the inner light.

(5) Rising above selfishness even in the pursuit of worldly life, not caring even for honour or dishonour, reward or punishment, power or insignificant status in life.

(6) Seeing the Supreme in every being, nay everywhere, and complete and total attachment to the Lord.

Our popular 'religion' is no religion at all. It has produced enough hatred, animosity and division in society. At the most, it can be called a tribal religion in the sense that in the dim past of humanity it helped individuals to sink their individuality to some limited extent. But it has preserved all the defects of undeveloped personality viz. anger, possessiveness, thinking ill of others, hatred for the enemies etc. Tribal religion teaches its adherents to create divisions in human society.



The opposite of tribal religion is rational religion, which produces spiritual temperament in individuals and brings about unity in society. Tribal religion is always very popular, because it suits the undeveloped and uncultured temperament of man. Rational religion or spiritual religion, which is the real religion, demands sublimation of usual human cravings and drives. Unfortunately, a priest unsually gives a stimulus to tribal religion, because it serves his mundane aspirations. An adherent of spiritual religion is tortured and crucified, because he offers a challenge to the crude nature of man. The beast in man is angered at the thought of the elimination of beastliness in him. He does not like to be made weaker even. As an overwhelming majority of mankind lives at the level of beastliness alone, opposition to spiritual religion is invariably very strong and is even mad. The name of religion gives beastliness a beautiful envelope to hide all its crudity and absurdities. Marx is right when he describes religion as the opium of the people. Just as a person addicted to opium loses all sensibility and rational thinking, in the same manner a follower of tribal religion loses the capacity of thinking in a constructive way. Tribal religion feeds on crude credulity and blind faith of people. It is inherited by a person like property, and persons quarrel for it as they quarrel for property, little realizing that real religion knows no barriers of sects, sex, colour, political party or anything else of the kind.

We cannot kill tribal religion, because it derives its strength from beastly aspects of human nature. But we can educate people so that they shall be able to make a distinction between the crude tribal religion and sound spiritual religion. By and by, they shall be able to grasp the essential nature of spiritual religion and shall allow its spirit to overwhelm their being. If it is not done, a rational man shall have to exclaim like Lucretius tantum religo putuit sundere melorum. (Such are the heights of wickedness to which men are driven by religion.)

But if the vision of spiritual religion dawns, one experiences the presence of that Supreme and says with Rabindranath Tagore:

"At last, when I woke from my slumber and opened my eyes, I saw Thee standing by me, flooding my sleep with thy smile."[8]

Religion means realization of God, the embodiment of perfection. We yearn for God, because He is our perfect Form. Swami Vivekanand declares in his Raja-yoga:

"Each soul is potentially Divine. The goal is to manifest this Divine within by controlling Nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy-by one or more, or all of these-and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms are but secondary details."[9]

Religion is the path that leads us to perfection of our being. Potentiality of being perfect is present in us, but we have to turn it into an actuality, into a realization. The proof of our being religious is both internal as well as external. Internal proof is provided by our inner realization that we have established our link with divinity. External proof is provided by the outward behaviour, conduct. Unless there is a synthesis between the internal being and the external conduct, no man is religious. The whole man cannot be divided into internal and external. If we taste a gulabjamun, an Indian sweet, from any side, we shall feel the same taste. In the same way, whether we see a person internally or externally the same sweetness of perfection should be discernible. To be religious is to be a whole man.

The Bhagavadgita exhorts us to attain this Brahmi Sthiti.[10] Jalaluddin Rumi, the Sufi saint, had stated

"He who rests in God dwells in security for ever."

Once a question was put to one who attained this state by a lay man 'What brought you to this perfection?' and the answer given according to Eckhart was "My union with God. For I cannot rest in anything that was less than God."[11] The realization transforms the entire outlook of a person. Then he sees his indivisibility, his wholeness which cannot be cut in parts. Let us glance at the meaning of the words of the Gita to have a nodding acquaintance with truth:



"Undivided, It seems to subsist divided in all beings."[12]

A religious person sings about God saying:

"Air which filleth all,
Wherein we always move
Ground and life of all things;
Sea without bottom or shore
Wonder of all wonders,
I sink myself in Thee,
I in Thee,
Thou in me,
Let me entirely vanish
To see and find only Thee."

Goethe tells us in his Faust

"Fill with it thy heart, large as it is,
And when thou art blissful in that feeling,
Name it happiness, heart, love God,
I have no name for it,
Feeling is all,
Name is sound and smoke,
Surrounding with mists
the glow of heavens."

A lover of God, a lover of supreme perfection, becomes perfection. A love for God is not like the worldly love where duality is the reality. In divine love, the duality vanishes, and only unity remains. This fact has to be understood properly.

We take the example of the milkmaids of Vrndavan in this context. They were so much attached to Krsna that they themselves became Krsna (priyasya pratirudh murtayah).

It should not be forgotten that real religion consists in going beyond the customary religion. In this connection the story told by Swami Vivekananda is very significant. He stated that one day he saw people rushing towards a temple. He followed them. After reaching the spot he saw that nobody was going inside the temple to worship, but all were offering flowers from outside. By the side of the door outside the temple, there stood the image of some other deity, to whom everybody was offering flowers and worship without any ex-

ception. The Swami asked one person

> "Brother, what is this matter ?". The person replied "It is enough if you throw one or two flowers from a distance to the deity inside the temple; but if you do not please and obey this deity at the door-gate, you will not be able to live in society." The Swami there upon enquired "What is the name of this deity ?" The reply given was "His name is Popular Custom".

Thus, we find that society confuses customary religion with the real religion.

We have already described the nature of real religion. It is however desirable to repeat that according to Indian standpoint real religion must be spritual in nature. The great Sankara had declared:

> "One may go on pilgrimage, observe religious vows and be charitable or anything else of the kind, but without knowledge of the Self one will never attain liberation, not even in hundred births."[13]

Vivekananda had stated in his commentary of Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms (II-25)

> Each soul is potentially divine.
> The goal is to manifest this divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal.
> Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control by philosophy-by one or more, or all of these-and be free.
> This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas or rituals, or books, or temples or forms are but secondary.[14]

If the touch of spirituality is banished from religion, the latter shall become dead, it would lose its significance and importance. A complete transformation of life can be possible when spiritual element is allowed to be a dominant note in religion. In the absence of spirituality the so called religion is nothing better than a blind ritualism. That is why in India the term used for religion is 'dharama' which literarily means a sustaining principle both for an individual as well as for society. If one protects dharma, the dharma protects him, states a popular dictum (dharmo raksati raksitah). Dharma stands both for a happy life as well as serene liberation. In India at least it was belived that temporal life is not opposed to the eternal life. It is wrong to draw a wedge between the empirical world and the spiritual universe. For a self which has imbibed the secret of dharma the world is a living God.



It is significant that Lort Srikrishna persuaded Arjuna to fight the battle of life, even when the latter wanted to flee away from the battle-field. The Lord repeatedly declared 'Therefore, O Arjuna, fight'. Real dharma consists in doing our duties sincerely and efficiently. Dharma bestows spiritual insight that enables a person to see life in its totality. It helps an individual to lead a sensible and satisfied life, and at the same time it offers a correct guidance to attain the state of liberation. Thus, dharma stands both for life as well as liberation. It brings about order and stability in one's life as well as society. It tells us that human body is a most desirable thing as it helps a person in realizing his real being. That is why the Yoga system tries to emphasize the health the health of body and inspires a man to make it a befitting vehicle of spiritual end. A man of dharma, therefore, has both bodily as well as spiritual health. He remains calm even in the midst of the greatest storms of life. He becomes sthitaprajna. His mind is not vacillating and weak. Only such persons can build an ideal society, only such persons can bring peace and prosperity to human society.

In the pages that follow we shall discuss the questions of religious language, God and religion, significance of Bhakti, religious consciousness, the self, liberation, death and the world. We shall also discuss the questions of problem of evil and miracle. In all these discussions, our main aim will be to acquaint ourselves with the Indian stand-point. Dharma is a very comprehensive term. Its emprire extends to every field of importance. It has inspired even the art, literature, science, culture and everything else that appertains human life.

The readers shall be free to form their own opinion about dharma after going through the entire work.

But before taking up the discussion about the topics mentioned herein above, we should first try to understand the significance of religion, which has been understood in this work in the sense of dharma.

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## 2

# Necessity of Religion

Is religion necessary in this age of science? This is a question that needs our answer. My answer is that religion is always necessary, but in the modern circumstances, its necessity has increased all the more. As R.L. Patterson has stated.

> "To be religious is to be rational, and to be rational is to be religious.[1] "

A penetrating and discerning author-thinker like Bernard Shaw has declared.

> "One of the reasons which have induced me to take up this subject of late years very seriously is the simple observation that people who have no religion are cowards and cats."[2]

But real religion is not a creed. This fact must be kept in mind. Our history tells us that many bloody wars have been waged in the name of religion. It has been stated that 'religion is the sob of the oppressed creatures, the heart of a heartless world, the spirit of condition utterly unspiritual. It is the opium of the poor. When religion is taken in the sense of a creed or a mechanical ritualism, it is more destructive than any atom bomb even.

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used. It is 'dharma' which means that thing which sustains life. The Mahabharata tells us that life cannot be sustained in the absence of dharma (dharanat dharma ityahur dharmo dharayate praja[3]). Dharma does not bring destruction. It brings material advancement as well as liberation[4]. The Mahabharata tells us that splendour, wealth, patience, intelligence, sustenance, faith, action, modesty etc. are the wives of religion, i.e. religion brings all these things.[5] Similarly, the Bhagavata tells us that faith, friendliness, compassion, peace, satisfaction, happiness, action, intellect, forbearance etc. are the wives of religion.[6] Dharma is another name of spiritual conduct.

In fact in India four major values have been accepted. They are Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, i.e. spirituality, wealth, satisfaction of desires and ultimately attainment of liberation. A person, first of all, must try to understand and imbibe the nature and significance of spirituality. Then he should try to earn wealth which is needed for maintaining life. Then he should try to satisfy his legitimate material desires. But ultimately, he should try to attain liberation. This plan of values shows that there is no opposition between the material life and spiritual life. In fact, spiritual attitude helps a person in earning wealth in a desirable way and abstain from earning it by unfair means. It also tells us that our material desires should be satisfied in a way that shall not disturb the structure of society. And in the final analysis, it should not be forgotten that a man is essentially the soul. He should make an effort to attain a stage that shall not be marked by any pain or misery.

To help an individual to realize this plan of ultimate values, the system of four ashrams was introduced. The names of these ashrams are Brahmacharya, Grahastha, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa. Brahmacharya is the stage when material and spiritual knowledge has to be gained. Then a person should marry and rear his family. Therafter, slowly, he should draw his mind away from the entanglements of family and think about spiritual truth learnt in the beginning. And ultimately, he should leave his household and fix his mind and energy on spiritual pursuits alone. The period



of every Ashrama is twenty five years. Thus, the entire human life was regulated in a very thoughtful manner. The result was that in ancient India, there were no major problems of family or society. Every thing went on smoothly. Individuals were happy, and the society was sound and healthy. Dharma was the dominant factor of human conduct at that time.

The very aim of Dharma is to lead a person away from pains and miseries and grant him eternal happiness. It is this element of Dharma which distinguishes man from an animal. If Dharma is taken away from man's like, he is reduced to the position of an animal. Radhakrishnan has rightly observed.

> "Religion is the discipline which touches the conscience and helps us to struggle with evil and sordidness, saves us from greed, lust and hatred, releases moral power, and imparts courage in the enterprize of saving the world."[7]

At present our world is in the worst possible condition. Individuals are unhappy. Even the most advanced nation like the U.S.A. presents a picture of individuals lacking mental peace, and family facility. There is a mentally deranged person out of every twenty Americans. There are more than 5000 psychiatrists treating more than 7,00,000 mentally diseased persons. There are many broken homes. The society itself is dominated by a spirit of careless storing of material comforts at the cost of higher values of life. The nation is amassing wealth through a wanton sale of arms and ammunition of war.

It is a notable fact that although the world has shrunk considerably due to fast means of communications, yet the spirit of non-adjustment and disharmony has increased so much that even husband and wife find it difficult to live together peacefully. The world is spending about eighty percent of its budget on preparing and perfecting weapons of extermination. High values of humanity like self-sacrifice, integrity, mutual co-operation have been thrown into the sea. Craftiness, exploitation and cruelty have been accepted

as the norms that should guide the conduct of a successful man. The world seems to have accepted the ideal of superman presented by Nietzsche, who mocks at the humanitarian virtues and believes in achieving selfish ends through the fiercest possible means. Hitlers and Mussolinis are flourishing in every nation and community. Religion has been accepted as a sect and is being exploited for political purposes. The result is that the world is heading for a nuclear war that will eliminate human beings from the bosom of earth.

Dharma alone can be helpful in this situation. It alone can return the days of peace and harmony all over the world. If we kill Dharma, we ourselves shall be killed[8]. We must not forget that Dharma is basically realization of the spiritual potentiality and unity. A picture of a person who has realized Dharma has been presented by Sri Aurbindo in his great work Savitri.

"An individual, one with cosmic self
In the heart of the Transcendent's miracle
And the secret of World-personality
Was the creator and the lord of all.
Mind was a single innumerable look
Upon himself and all that he became,
Life was his drama and the Vast a stage,
The universe was his body, God its soul.
All was one single immense reality,
All its innumerable phenomenon.
Her spirit saw the world as living God;[9]
It saw the One and knew that all was He."

Dharma can bring health and happiness to man and it inspires people to build a world free from discords and wars, because it tells us that real happiness lies in becoming the limitless (yo vai bhuma tatsukham) and the entire universe is filled with God (isavasyamidam sarvam). A man of Dharma prays.

"Give me wide walls to build my house of Life
The North shall be of Love, against the wind of hate,
The South of Tolerance, that I may outreach hate,



The East of Faith, that rises clear and new every day,
The West of Hope, that e'en dies a glorious way
The threshold 'neath my feet shall be Humility
The roof-the very sky itself- Infinity:
Give me wide walls to build my house of Life.

In these days of universal madness, sanity can come only through Dharma. When the nations are preparing the sepulchre of humanity[10] only a man of Dharma can have the courage to walk alone on the right path with the confidence that sooner or later the others shall also follow him.[11] The Mahabharata tells us that where Dharma lives, only there victory exists."[12]

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    Gone are the days when madness was confined
    By seas or hills from spreading through mankind
    When though a Nero fooled upon a spring,
    Wisdom still reigned unruffled in Peking,
    And God in Welcome smiled from Buddha's face,
    Though Calvin in Geneva preached of grace.
    For now our linked-up globe has shrunk so small
    One Hitler in it means mad days for all.

11. I started on the journey all alone
Alone had I resolved to reach my goal
But as I went along people came man after man
And the lonely march became a caravan.

(Majrooh)

12. Yato dharmostato jayah
The Bhagavadgita states

> "Wherever is Sri Krisna, the Lord of Yoga, and wherever is Arjuna, the wielder of the Gandiva bow, assured are there prosperity, victory, glory and righteousness. This is my conviction." (XVIII-78)

# 3

# Religious Language

Language differs from subject to subject. Science has its own language. Literature has its own language. Hence, we can say that religion too must have its peculiar language. But before making a mention of this language, let us try to know the view of the scholars who insist that even in the domain of philosophy of religion, absolutely logical method should be followed.

Adherents of this view assert that principle of verification should be followed even in the domain of religion. Statements even in the domain of religion should be acceptable to the extent they are varifiable through experience of senses. No statement should be accepted that cannot be verified through such experience. The adherents of this view state that concepts of God, soul, purity etc. cannot be verifiable through senses. Hence, they cannot be accepted. Ludwig Wittgenstein states in his Tractus Logico-Philosophious.

> "Most propositions and questions that have been written about philosophical matters are not false, but nonsensical. We can not therefore answer questions of this kind at all, but only state their senselessness."

This principle of verification is based on the theory of logical positivism. This theory has its own merit, because its aim is to destroy the possibility of doubts. But we should not

forget that this theory has its own limits. If this fact is not realized, this theory may not prove useful. Nay, it may end in disaster too.

The basis of verifiability is sense experience. But we say that even the truth of this very principle cannot be proved on the basis of verifiability. Can we verify the verifiability itself ? When this theory itself is unverifiable, how can we ac cept it as a true theory? But it cannot be denied that in the modern period some philosophers have started a new tendency of an analysis of language. It is stated that analysis is the method of philosophy." All philosophy is a 'critique of language' "The object of philosophy is the 'logical clarification of thoughts. " "A philosophical work consists entirely of elucidations. The result of philosophy is" states Wittgenstein, "not a number of philosophical propositions, but to make out propositions clear." It is stated that many of the misconceptions prevailing in the domain of philosophy can be destroyed, if logical language is used.

This system of analysis of language has been accepted in the realm of religion too by some thinkers.[1]

It should be never forgotten that religious language is neither analytic nor synthetic in nature. An analytic proposition is that in which predicate does not say anything new about the subject, and a mere analysis of the subject is presented, e.g. This mango is red or this pot is made of copper...Analytic propositions are called necessary because it is not possible to negate the prediate in view of the fact that it offers merely an analysis of the subject itself. Logical and mathematical propositions are analytical in nature.

Now the question may be asked "Can we consider religious propositions analytical in nature?" Our answer to this question is 'No'. We can judge the falsity or validity of an analytic proposition on the basis of the definition of the terms used. It is not possible to give definitions of the terms used in the field of religion. For example while it is easy to state that the following propositions are correct

(i) 2 x 2 = 4



(ii) The sum of all the angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles

because we are aware of the definition of a triangle or the principles of multiplication, but cannot say about the truth or falsity of proposition like

(i) God is the creator of the universe

(ii) God is compassionate

because God has not created the universe in the manner an architect builds a house or a carpenter makes a piece of furniture. Nor do we know the nature of compassion found in God. If a person calls God the creator of the universe or compassionate, he does so because of his inner faith. Hence, a religious proposition cannot be analytical in nature.

Then should we say that the religious proposition is synthetic in nature? That proposition is synthetic which tells something new in the predicate about the subject e.g. gold is a precious metal or the morning air is good for health. As such propositions are based on sensual experience, it is possible to verify them. But religious propositions are not synthetic in this sense. When a saint tells us "God is a treasure house of infinite excellent attributes ", he does not say anything new about God. Who can say anything new about God? Moreover, it is not possible to verify such statements, because both God and His attributes are beyond the range of our ordinary experience.

According to some thinkers, religious propositions cannot be called even ethical in nature. Ethical propositions accept the validity of a statement on the basis of ideal conduct accepted by a society. But religion is basically an expression of one's faith.

This shows that religious language has its own peculiar nature. In the domain of religion many words like 'good', 'just', 'omnipotent', 'omniscient' etc. are used for God. But such words in fact do not carry their usual meaning. For example, when I say that my friend. Rama is a good boy, the term good used here has some other meaning than the meaning of the term 'good' used in a proposition like "God is good ". My friend Rama's conduct is termed 'good' because

of the ethical meaning given to this trem by society and its laws. God is above such laws and usages. If it is stated that Rama's conduct and God's behaviour are termed good because of certain similarity, then we shall have to accept that there is some third norm in the light of which anything is called good. But there cannot be any third norm, because nothing is there which can be beyond God. Then we shall have to say that there is some similarity between God's goodness and the goodness of Rama's conduct. If we accept this,we shall have to presume that 'goodness' cannot be exactly similar as it is deeply related with the nature of the person in which it is found. Hence, the goodness of God is certainly something different from the goodness of Rama's conduct. God is infinite, while Rama is a mortal being. How can there be exact similarity?

The problem of evil is the result of not understanding this fact. We find misery, oppression, suffering, exploitation etc. in the world, and therefore think that God who has created the world is not good, because our cancept of goodness tells us that only that thing is good that saves people from suffering, miseries, oppressions etc.. God is not good in this sense; He is not just in this sense. God is neither good not just. But our deeper thinking will tell us that this type of thinking may not be correct. God has created miseries and obstacles with a view to inspire a person to fight the odds and thus build a strong personality. If every obstacle is removed, every problem is nonexistent, goodness shall become very cheap and easy and shall lose its significance. If we interpret things in this manner, there is no problem of evil. Everything is good in its place.

Sometimes another question is put about religious language. "Is religious language cognitive or non-cognitive in nature?" For example, it is said that God loves mankind or He destroys evil- doers. These statements are concerned with facts. Traditionally such statements have been accepted as true, but it is impossible to verify such statements. Our Science does not give any knowledge about God. Nor does our ordinary experience give us any guidance on this point. Hence, some thinkers are of the opinion that religious



language is non-cognitive i.e. its aim is different from the aim of a scientific language. The aim of religious language does not seem to analyse facts. John Wisdom has stated that the question of God's existence is at present much different than what it was in the primitive period.[2] There was a time when people used to see souls in trees, nymphs in the rivers, and believed that God rules the world. Our modern man does not think on these lines. He is of the opinion that our faith in God is produced because of the traditions prevailing in our family and environment. That is why concepts of God differ from religion to religion and from man to man.

Thus, we find that some modern minds are critical about the very nature of religious language.

But who can deny the validity of religious experience? Even those people who think religious language to be nonsensical accept that religious experience has its peculiar tinge. It generates a tendency of thinking and acting in a particular way in an individual. It influences an individual in an integral manner, and places him on the pedastal of purity from the position of impurity. We may call it a tendency of religious faith. Saints and devotees express their inner feelings in an unmistakable tone. For example, Gandhi asserts that God is with us and looks after us in such a loving way that we feel that He has no other work but to care for us. Any person who has such a faith is freed from all the anxieties for all the times.[3]

We shall have to accept therefore that religious language has its unique character that distinguishes it from the language used in the domains of science and other subjects. Even though, the religious language bears some resemblance with our ordinary language, but it is much deeper and significant. We can say in other words that language of religion is symbolic i.e. it has a meaning different from the terms of our ordinary language, because religion is much different from the objects of our experience. God is understood in the sense of supreme existent being. Such a being is certainly quite different from the objects of our empirical world, and hence one must have a sense of careful understanding of the meaning of the religious symbols. Even

though the words used in a religious language are the words of our common knowledge, but the meaning conveyed through them is superhuman. Symbols alone can convey the deep meaning lurking behind words to some extent. It should be noted that a symbol is a visible or audible sign or emblem of some thought, emotion or experience interpreting what can be really grasped only by the mind and imagination by something which enters in the field of observation. Whitehead has stated

> "Symbols are not proxi for their objects ... It is the conception not the things that symbols directly mean."

This is true even in our ordinary life. For example, the tri- colour flag of India which is the national flag of India is merely a combination of three colours. But it is so significant being a symbol of Indian nation that the army is prepared to give any amount of sacrifice to protect it. Symbol may be traditional or entirely new. But the important thing is that symbol assumes the form of the thing it represents. Symbol is more than a sign. Sign merely gives a direction, but a symbol represents something and assumes the form of that very thing that it represents.

Religion cannot do without symbols. Temple, church, idol, scripture etc. are just symbols. Supreme Reality or God is certainly quite distinct from all the objects of this world. One can understand It only through symbols. Brahman, God, Too, Allah, Isvara or any other term like this is merely a symbol, because the Real is nameless. Name belongs to only material objects. Hence, the Supreme has to be given some significant name by way of a symbol.

Indian philosophy and religion has its peculiar symbols for the Real. For example the term 'Vishnu' is derived from the root 'vis' meaning 'to pervade'. Hence, 'Vishnu'is the all-pervading Supreme Being. 'Rama' is derived from the root 'ram' meaning again 'to pervade'. 'Rama is therefore the all-pervading reality of the universe.

Every term used for the Real in India has a symbolic meaning. The term 'krsna' means that being wherein existence and bliss both are present.[4] The term may also mean that being which destroys the evil.[5] The term 'siva' means that being which brings about welfare.[6]



Even the forms of the deities have symbolic meaning. 'Ganapati represents perfect wisdom. Goddess Saraswati is one who gives the essence (sara) of our own Self (swa). Mrinalini Sarabhai has rightly written 'Symbols in Indian civilization have always been powerful representations of the higher reality. The principle has been understood by its support on our plans of existence of its symbolical counterpart. The link between the worlds, the outer and inner, the higher and the lower, is through the language of symbols. How else can a reality where 'sight cannot go, nor the mind, where we cannot know, we cannot understand' -something 'other than all that is known' be comprehended?[7]

The stories of the Upanisads and the epics as well as Puranas are symbolic. For example, the Mahabharata is merely a symbol of a conflict between the bad tendencies and good tendencies taking place in a human heart. Similar is the case with the Ramayana.

Shri Aurbindo writes in his classic work 'Savitri' that it is a legend and a symbol. He states:

> "The tale of Satyavana and Savitri is recited in the Mahabharata as a story of conjugal love conquering death. But this legend is, as shown by many features of human tale, one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle. Satyavana is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance; Savitri is the Divine Word, daughter of the Sun, goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save; Asvapati, the Lord of th Horse, her human father, is the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes; Dyumatsena, the Lord of Shining Hosts, father of Satyavana, is the Divine Mind here fallen blind, losing its celestial kingdom of vision, and through that loss its kingdom of glory."[8]

The Bhagavata contains a story of 'rasa' of Krishna and the Gopis. Some Western minds read in this episode a presence of cupidity. But in fact it is a symbol of play between the Supreme Lord and His devoted souls, Krishna symbolosing the Supreme, and the Gopikas the human souls intoxicated with divine love. The term used for the Gopis is 'Krsnagrhitamanasah' i.e. the souls whose minds were taken up by Krishna'.[9] The term used for Krishna is God.[10] Gopis represent the souls who are free from the tinge of every corporal desire.[11] Much harm has been done to religion by those persons who fail to understand the religious symbolism of Indian religion and do injustice with it by interpreting spiritual things in material terms.

Sometimes such language is used in Indian religion for the description of the Supreme Truth which appears to be full of apparent contradictions. For example, the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad (3-8-8) tells us that the Real is neither concrete, nor atomic, neither small, nor big etc. The Gita tells us that the Real is very far away, and yet is closest to us. Some times the language used is negative in nature e.g. formless (arupa), non-atomic (ananu) etc. This type of language is symbolic because it shows that the Real cannot fit in any description known to the world.

It has been stated very openly that the religious truth has to be understood through a proper understanding of 'itihas' and 'puran' because unless a person is able to develop a capacity of understanding the symbolism, he cannot understand the real nature of Truth. It should also be noted that in India at least religion is deeply connected with conduct (acara-prabhavo dharmah). The religious stories try to inspire a person to give desirable character to one's conduct. Symbolic language alone can express the nature of religious consciousness to certain extent. Hence, to decry religion of India on the basis of its stories of the puranas is to betray one's ignorance of the nature of Indian religion, which has a capacity of accommodating the lowest to the highest forms of religion, without losing its intrinsic nature and nobility. Its aim is to realize the Infinite, and not anything less than that. (yo vai bhuma tat sukham, nalpe sukhamasti). But it



believes in revealing the ultimate truth gradually in keeping with the standard of comprehension of the Ultimate that differs from man to man.

The Real has been described at times as 'Kavi' and 'Manisi'. The term 'kavi' is very significant. Just as a poet composes a poem and gives it to the readers to understand it, and just as the poet is imperceptibly present in the poem, in the same way the Supreme has composed the poem in the form of the universe, and has left it to every person to understand it in the light of his capacity of comprehension, and at the same time the Real is present in the universe. This reminds us that religious language resembles a poetic language. But it is quite different from the language of science, because the latter is mechanical and non- imaginative. Creative imagination alone can help us to understand the basic nature of the Real.

If one thinks that one can understand the nature of religion through mechanical and non-creative scholarship, one lives in a fools' paradise. Kabir had very aptly stated that the majority of people have made a mechanical study of scriptures, but they failed in their objective. They could not become learned. Only that person is able to understand the nature of the Real who knows the language of love. Such a person experiences the Real and becomes immersed in It.[12]

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    anabudh budhe, tire jai budhe saba anga.– Bihari

# 4

# God and Religion

God occupies the most important position in the domain of religion. It is true that the concepts of God differ from one religious sect to the other. Whether a religious sect belongs to the East or the West, God is generally present there. A faith in the existence of God is so deeprooted that even spacious reasons have been forwarded to prove His existence. It is worthwhile to have a bird's eye view of these arguments before we proceed further in the matter.

Plato whose period is from 427 BC to 347 BC has the credit of giving a systematic concept of God in the West for the first time. According to him, God is the 'architect' of the universe. The term used for God by Plato is Demiurge. He is not a creator, because he merely moulded the pre-existent matter and did not create the world out of nothing. He is the source and principle of power and energy in nature and mind. He is not a personal divinity, but is the source of the goodness of the world. God has made the universe out of pre-existent eternal ideas or arche- types. Although God is connected with the essences and the existents, He is different from both.

According to Aristotle, God is Pure Form. He is the unmoved mover. God induces motion in other things just as a

fixed idea or an object of desire moves the human will to act. He is thought- thinking-thought. He is prue intelligence.

The medieval Christian, however, thought that God created the world out of nothing. This was the period of extreme faith.

> "Understand in order that you may believe, believe in order that you may understand. Some things we do not believe unless we understand them; others we do not understand unless we believe"

declared St. Augustine.

> "Faith seeks, understanding finds."

Another notable Christian thinker St.Thomas Aquinas was of the opinion that philosophy passes from facts to God, and theology proceeds from God to facts. God is a matter of faith. There can be justification in believing only what can be demonstrated through reason. God is pure form, pure actuality. We have a knowledge of God through faith and not by reasoning.

However, there was a shift of emphasis from faith to reason with Descartes. For him God is a demonstrable truth.

Descartes established first of all that the existence of the self cannot be doubted. One can doubt everything else, but one cannot doubt one's own self. The very existence of doubt establishes the existence of the doubter 'I think, therefore, I am' (Cogito, Ergo Sum). Now this self is not empty. It contains certain ideas. Some ideas are 'adventitious' as they come from the external things of the world. One can doubt their validity as the very existence of the outside material objects can be subjected to doubt. But apart from these ideas, we have another type of ideas, which are 'innate' in nature. They do not come from outside objects. These ideas have indubitable validity. Descartes presents such two innate ideas, which are relevant to the proof of God.

The first of these ideas is the idea of a 'Perfect Being'. This idea logically implies the existence of the perfect Being or God, because if God does not exist. He cannot be called perfect. Perfection demands the quality of existence too.



Moreover, it is to be noted that I cannot be the cause of the idea of a Perfect Being, because being imperfect, how is it possible for me to have an idea about a Perfect Being. Hence, this idea of a Perfect Being has been placed in my mind by a Perfect Being Himself. The very idea of a Perfect Being thus implies the existence of God. It is to be noted still further that the concept of infinity of God is not a negative concept, because finiteness implies infiniteness. If I am finite, there must be a Being who is infinite. Without a concept of infiniteness, how is it possible to have a concept of finiteness? There is still another argument. I could not have been the cause of my own existence. If I had a power of creating myself, I would have made myself perfect and I should have a power to preserve myself, which is not the case. If my parents were my creaters, then they too would have made me perfect, for no parent would like to make his child imperfect. Hence it is clear that God does exist who creates all of us.

God is eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, source of all goodness and truth. Descartes has accepted like Duns Scotus that we should accept reason only in so far as it does not conflict with revelation.

Spinoza thought that the existence of God is self-evident and does not need any demonstration or proof. He accepted God as the Substance, from which everything has emanated. Substance is that which exists in itself and is conceived through itself. Nothing can be conceived without presupposing substance, but substance can be thought about without any pre-suppositions, because it is absolutely independent. Substance is God. It is totally independent, infinite, unlimited by anything else and therefore one, self-caused. All its qualities and actions follow from its own nature as the properties of a triangle follow from its own nature. Neither intelligence nor will in the sense in which they belong to a human being, belong to the Substance. It does not act according to any plan. In this connection the following words of Spinoza deserve attention.

> "I confess that the view which subjects all things to the indifferent will of God and makes them depend on divine caprice, comes nearer the truth than the

view of those who maintain that God does everything for the sake of the good. For these persons seem to place something outside of God which is independent of him, to which he looks as to a model while he is at work, or at which he aims as if at a mark. This is nothing else than subjecting God to fate, and is a most absurd view of him whom we have shown to be the first and only free cause of the essence and existence of things."

He is of the opinion that God is in the world and the world is in God. His view is known as pantheism, because according to him God and the world are one. God is the plurality of objects, natura naturata as well as the source of everything, natura naturans.

God has innumerable attributes. By attribute Spinoza imples that which the intellect perceives as constituting the essence of the substance. Gottfried Wilhem Leibnitz was an oustanding German Philosopher. He is best known for this theory of monads which are spiritual or psychical forces. Every monad is a 'living mirror of the universe'. Monads form a graduated progressive series, from the lowest to the highest. God is the highest monad, he is the most perfect monad, the monad of monads.

God's existence is proved by him through his own arguments. The highest monad has to be accepted on the principle of continuity. The principle of sufficient reason demands a cause of monads. God is that cause. The universe has a harmony and order. It demands a harmonizer. The cause of the universe must be outside the universe, because if it is in the universe, it cannot be the cause. God is that cause of the universe. God is one because, the universe is one. God must be intelligent, because the universe, his creation exhibits intelligent construction. Moreover, there are eternal and necessary truths as is evident from the truths of logic and geometry. These truths presuppose an eternal intellect as their cause.

Kant was critical about the cosmological, teleological and ontological proofs of God. But he advanced moral argument



to prove His existence. The categorical imperative implies a good and virtuous will., a will that does not aim at pleasure and aims at performance of duty for duty's sake. But our reason tells us that such a will deserves to get happiness. A good man ought to be happy. Therefore, the highest good implies virtue as well as happiness. It also implies that there must be a Being who keeps the record of people's acts and apportions happiness in ratio of their merit. Such a being must posses absolute intelligence, absolute goodness, absolute power, absolute knowledge and absolute authority. Such an all-wise, all-powerful, all-good Being is God.

For Hegel God is the Idea, meaning the potential universe, the eternal who is the totality of all possibilities of evolution.

God is the moving, living reason of the universe; He reveals Himself in the universe, in nature, in history, in fact in everything. However, as Hegel is committed to the concept of evolution, he could arrive to the concept of developing God, who cannot be called the God. For an average person of faith, God is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world. He is much bigger than the universe. Perhaps in Hegel's philosophy God is inferior to the Absolute. F.H. Bradley is of the opinion that wherever relations are present, mind finds it impossible to explain it without implying some self- contradiction. The concept of God is nothing but a matter of illusion. The Absolute alone is real.

> "If I am forced to take reality as having...only one sense," writes Bradley," I must reply that God is not real at all, any more than you and I are real. Nothing to me in this sense is real except the universe as a whole; for I cannot think God as including, or as equivalent to the entire universe..." (Essays on Truth and Reality, Oxford, Clarendon Press)

William James states

> "On the pragmatic principles, if the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily, in the widest sense of the term, it is true."

He says that an individual has a "will to believe". A person

makes a vital choice of accepting God, because such a belief helps him in many ways. Not to make such a choice or suspend one's belief until verification is also a choice, but this choice is attended with disadvantages. If a person who believes in God is supposed to be guided by a passion, a person who does not believe in God is equally guided by passion. God is the biggest power and it guarantees "an ideal order" that shall be permanently preserved.

> "Theism at a single stroke....changes the dead blank 'it' of the world into a living 'thou', with whom the whole man may have dealing."

The theory of Emergent Evolution has its own way of looking at God. For example, Alexander in his work 'Space, Time & Deity' tries to establish that the process of evolution is going on. Evolution is not a continuous series, but is marked by several levels or stages. It cannot be represented by a straight line, but by a ladder. The different levels of evolution are electrons and protons, atoms, molecules, cells, organism, consciousness and self-consciousness. Lloyd Margan in his work 'Emergent Evolution' writes:

> "The world is a pyramid with ascending levels. Near its base is a swarm of atoms. Above this level, atoms combine to form new units, the molecules; higher up on one line of advance are the organisms; yet higher is mind."

According to Alexander, the different stages of emergent evolution are as stated herein below:

(1) The lowest level - Space - Time.

(2) Next is the rise of matter with its primary qualities.

(3) Then comes an emergence of secondary qualities.

(4) The fourth level sees the rise of life.

(5) At the fifth level emerges mind.

(6) At the sixth and the highest level will be an emergence of Deity or God

God is the pulling force of the evolution. But the ideal of



the evolution viz. God is still to emerge.

Kierkegaard was of the opinion that no proof of God can be given and therefore God shall remain 'an objective uncertainty'. But this very God becomes a subjective certainty in experience. He says:

> "One proves God's existence by wroship...not by proofs."

Thus, we find that many attempts have been made in the West to prove the exitence of God. Human faith needs logic too to sustain itself. Or we can say, that even faith has its own logic for accepting God. One should not think that all thinkers of the West accept the existence of God easily and do not criticise the proofs extended for it. It is impossible that everybody can think alike. In this context the criticism of Hume deserves a mention.

Hume crticies the various arguments put forth to prove God's existence. For exmaple, he is critical of the argument from design, which infers the existence, wisdom and goodness of God from the order, beauty and goodness of the world. His criticism is that unless the cases are exactly similar, we cannot draw right conclusion from any argument from analogy. Now, there is a world of difference between the universe and house, furniture, machines etc. Hence, what holds good in the case of worldly objects, may not be true in the case of the universe. Design, as found in human beings and animals, is only one of the principles, like heat or cold, attraction and repulsion etc., of the universe. How is it possible to conclude from the part to the whole? Moreover, why should we think that the nature invariably indulges in copying. It is quite reasonable to think that the house that we see must have been built by somebody, because we have perception of such species of effect from particular species of cause. Here analogy has some significance. But the universe cannot be called quite similar to a house. Hence, even a conjecture of its maker cannot be accepted without some doubt.

If we think that God is like man and has design like man, we just indulge into anthropomorphism and do not do justice with God. Human mind is changeable, weak and finite.

can we say the same about God's mind? If it is so, then God ceases to be God.

Some persons try to infer the nature of God from the nature of the universe. But this attempt too fails in its objective. The universe is finite, is God, its cause, the same? If effect resembles the cause then God must be finite too much like the universe. Even unity of God cannot be established. An effect may be the result of a combination of several causes. Is it not possible that many gods might have co-operated in generating this universe. It is better to think that the universe resembles an animal or a vegetable more than a machine. It has grown like an animal out of a process of generation.

Hume states that we cannot say that God possesses moral attributes like man. There is enough oppression, agony and misery in the universe to suggest that its maker is not kind-hearted and benevolent. Perhaps, the intention of its maker is just to preserve and propagate the species and not their happiness.

The total effect of such arguments is to prove that God's existence cannot be demonstrated.

Hume was of the opinion that faith in God is not founded on speculation, curiosity or love for truth, but it rests on man's desire for happiness, his fear of future misery, his dread of death, his desire of getting security of every kind.

Despite all these arguments, God's existence cannot be denied. We find a genral tendency in man to believe in God. This tendency is a stamp of the Divine Existence. If God is a fiction, why is this fiction continuing right from the oldest period of humanity till this date? Therefore, God does exist. God's existence can be perceived only by those who possess necessary qualifications to do so.

## II

### GOD IN INDIAN RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

In the Western philosophy, the term 'God' has been used in



a wider as well as a narrower sense. In the wider sense, God implies the highest reality. In the narrower sense, God denotes the supreme person who creates and maintains the universe and is an object of human worship. Spinoza, Hegel and Whitehead take the term God in the wider sense, E.Caird, following Hegel takes the term God in the sense of an "absolute power or principle".[1] But James Martineay thinks God to be "a Divine Mind and Will ruling the universe and holding moral relations with mankind."[2] This is certainly a lower sense of the term God.

In Indian Philosophy usually the word Brahman is used in the sense of the highest Reality of the universe. In fact it is the sole Reality. But sometimes this term is used for the supreme person who creates, maintians and destroys the universe, too. The wrod Ishwar is, however, generally used in the sense of God as the creator, sustainer and destoying power of the universe and deserves to be worshipped by the devotees.

In the olden Vedic period, we find two tendencies present-one- polytheistic, and the other henotheistic. The latter tendency culminates in monotheism. This monotheism in course of time culminated into monism and philosophical non-dualism.[3]

It is to be noted that in the Upanisads the monistic concept of God is dominant. At the same time, God has become associated with two distinct and divergent descriptions.

> "There is one without a second"[4] "All this is Brahman."[5]

Such descriptions indicate the nirguna or qualityless Real. Such descriptions show that the Real is beyond any description. No words can describe it. Human language is fit only for the objects of this world. What lies beyond it, cannot be subjected to any description. Mind and language fail to reach it. It can be indicated that at best only by saying "not this, not that"[6]. But this is not the only description of the Real. It can also be described as the ruler of the univese, as the ultimate source of every thing that we find here, as the creator, maintainer and destroyee of this creation.[7] When the Real is

viewed in this way, it is endowed with all the virtues. For exmaple, the Chandogya Upanisad writes:

> "Verily, all this is Brahman, for from it (creation) comes forth, in Him alone it is dissolved, and in Him, it is sustained. Tranquil one should meditate on Him thus- He who consists of mind, whose body is life, whose form is light of consciousness, whose will is always true, whose soul is space, encompassing all worlds, all desires, all odours, all tastes, all the worlds, speechless and unconcerned."[8]

The Svetasvatara Upanisad describes the Supreme as

> "the lord of matter, individual selves and the forces of nature (pradhana - ksetranjna-patirgune sah)".

It significantly adds

> "Know nature (maya) to be the mysterious power, of which the Supreme Being is wielder.[9]"

The Upanisad is full of passages which describe God in this very manner. He is the Father and Mother of the universe; He is the creator and protector of the universe; He bestows grace on all beings;but at the same time, He is not different from the Absolute (Brahman) described in the Upanisads elsewehre. The following passage shall illustrate this very point;

> "He is the soul of the universe. He is immortal and rules the universe. He is omniscient,omnipresent and protector of the world. He is the eternal ruler. He is the supreme Lord. He is that who at the beginning of creation projected Brahma (universal consciousnes), who delivered the Vedas unto Him, who constitutes the supreme bridge of immortality, who is partless, free from actions, tranquil, faultless, taintless and resembles the fire that has consumed its fuel. Seeking liberation, I go for refuge to that effulgent one whose light turns the understanding towards the Atman."[10]

Thus, we find that the Upanisads are replete with passages that desribe the Supreme both in quality-ful as well as



qualityless forms. The Savisesa or Saguna (qualityful) Brahman in course of time became a Personal God in different cults that flourished after the Upanisadic period. What was a seedling in the Upanisads, became a tree in course of time and got admittance in religion. The Upanisads are the windows of Indian philosophy and religion. They are the strong foundations on which the different philosophical and religious schools of India built their mansions. Without understanding the nature and teaching of the Upanisads, nobody can understand the true character of not only Indian philosophy, he cannot understand even Indian culture. Indian culture believes in unity in diversity. This basic character of Indian culture has emanated from the Upanisads. Upanisads are the treasure-houses of all the philosophical systems that ever flourished in India.

The Indian systems of philosophy are usually classified into two categories-heterodox and orthodox i.e. those that do not accept the Vedas as authority and those who accept them as authority and respect their words. The Carvaka, the Jain and the Buddhist systems are considered heterodox, because they refuse to accept the Vedas as authority. The Samkhya, the Yoga, the Nyaya, the Vaisesika, the Purva-Mimamsa, the Uttara-Mimamsa (Vedanta) are considered orthodox because they respect the Vedas and their words.

It is worth nothing that faith in God is not very relevant for this division. If the Carvaka, the Jain and the Buddhist systems of philosophies do not accept the existence of God, even the Samkhya and the Purva Mimamsa do not have any place for God. This indicates the freedom and unconventionality present in the domain of philosophy in India. The Carvaka accepts perception as the sole means of valid knowledge and consistently rejects God as He cannot be perceived. The Carvakas are of the opinion that the ultimate constitutents of the universe are four elements viz. earth, fire, water and air. Their atoms combine mechanically and these combinations are the various objects that we see in the universe. There is no other element except the four ones mentioned above. There is, therefore, no soul or spiritual element apart from the gross body that we see. Consciousness

too is the product of the combinations of the four elements. Just as a combination of betel leaf, which is green, lime, which is white, and catechu, which is brown, when combine produces red colour, or just as when juice of grapes when made to ferment develops the quality of intoxication, in the same way, when the four elements combine, consciousness is produced. When the body is no more, the consciousness too is dead. Therefore it is wrong to think that there is any substance like soul which is immortal and is not destroyed even when the body persihes. Where is the necessity of the existence of God? Nobody has created this universe. Therefore the creator does not exist. The universe is produced by the combination of the physical elements. It is the very nature of atoms to act. The universe has neither been created nor designed by any Being whatsoever. If any God is at all to be postulated, then the king, who can be seen and who can punish or reward a person, should be considered to be god.[11] What is generally known as soul is also merely body associated with consciousness (caitanya-visista-deha eva atma).

Buddhism at least in its original form did not accept any God. Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, was of the view that the main problem before mankind is to destory the miseries that we find in the universe. Buddha did not like to entangle himself with any metaphysical questions, because that meant forgetting the main problem of putting an end to suffering. When anybody asked him questions regarding soul, its transmigration, origin of universe etc, he would refuse to answer them. There were ten such questions which were considered uncertain and practically useless and therefore were not answered by him. These questions were as stated here in below:

(i) Is the world eternal?

(ii) Is it non-eternal?

(iii) Is it finite?

(iv) Is it infinite?

(v) Is the soul same as the body?



(vi) Is it different from the body?

(vii) Does one who has known the truth live again after death?

(viii) Does he not live again after death (ix) Do they both live again and not live again after death? (x) Does he neither live, not-live again after death?

These are considered to be indeterminable questions .

The teachings of Buddha centres around four noble truths (catvari arya-satyani). They are

(i) There is nothing but suffering (duhkha) in the world.

(ii) There is a cause of this suffering (duhkha-samudaya)

(iii) It is possible to end this suffering (duhkha-nirodha) and

(iv) There is a way that can lead to the ending of this suffering (duhkha-nirodha-marga).

Buddha, therefore, did not discuss the question of God. But later Buddhism produced thinkers who tried to prove that there is no God at all.

The substance of the argument is that the universe is ruled by the principle of action (karma) alone. There is no First Cause or the Creator of the universe. Universe is without any beginning or end. Buddha stated "Without beginning and end is this world- process (samsara)

> "A fruit does not originate of itself,nor is it made by another; it originates in virtue of its cause; it ceases on the cessation of its cause."[12]

The universe is ruled by the principle of dependent origination (pratitya-samutpada). No God presides over it (aswamika). It has no soul whatsoever (anatmaka). Therefore, the causal or cosmological argument has no validity.

Buddha places the following argument before Anatha-

pindaka to prove his contention that there is no God at all.

> "If the universe had been created by God, there should be no change or destruction, there should be no such thing as sorrow or calamity, as right or wrong, as all things, pure and impure, must come from Him alone. If sorrow and joy, love and hate, which spring up in all conscious beings, be the work of God, he himself must be capable of sorrow and joy, love and hatred, and if he has these, how can he to be perfect? If God be the maker of the universe and if all beings are required to submit silently to their creator's authority, what would be the use of practising virtue? The performance of right or wrong would be the same, as all deeds are his making and the creator is responsible for them. But if sorrow and suffering are attributed to another cause then there would be something of which God is not the cause. Why then, should not all that exists be uncaused too? Again, if God be the maker, he acts either with or without purpose. If he acts with purpose, he cannot be said be said to be all-perfect, for purpose necessarily implies satisfaction of a want. If he acts without a purpose, he must be like a lunatic or suckling baby. Besides, if God be the creator, why should not people reverently submit to him, why should they offer supplications to him, when sorely pressed by necessity? And why should people a dore more gods than one? Thus, the idea of God is proved false by rational argument, and all such contradictory assertions should be exposed. If the theists say, God is too great for man to be able to understand him then it follows that his qualities also surpass our range of thought, and we can neither know him nor attribute to him the quality of creator."[14]

There are persons who consider the universe to be a manifestation of the Absolute. But this too is untenable, according to Buddha.

> "If by the Absolute is meant something out of relation to all known things, its existence cannot be established by any reasoning (hetu-vidyasastra). How can we know that anything unrelated to other things exists at all? The entire world as we know it, is a system of relations;we know nothing that is, or can be, unrelated: How can that which depends on nothing and is related to nothing produce things which are related to one another and depend for their existence upon one another? Again, the Absolute is one or many. If it be one, how can it be the cause of the different things which, as we know, are produced by different causes? If there be as many different Absolutes as there are things, how can the latter be related to one another? If the Absolute pervades all things and fills all space, then it cannot also make them, for there is nothing to make. Further, if the Absolute is devoid of all qualities (nirguna), all things arising from it, ought likewise be devoid of all qualities (nirguna). But in reality all things in the universe are circumscribed through out by qualities. Hence, the Absolute cannot be their cause. If the Absolute be considered to be different from the qualities, how does it continually create the things possessing such qualities, and manifest itself in them? Again, if the Absolute be the unchangeable, all things should be unchangeable too, for the effect cannot differ from the cause in nature. But all things in the world undergo change and decay. How then can the Absolute which pervades all is the cause of everything. Why should we seek liberation? For, we ourselves possess this Absolute and must patiently endure every suffering and sorrow incessantly created by the Absolute, (Asvag-hosa's Buddha-carita)."[15]



Jainism also denies the existence of any God. It does not accept the plea that God created the universe and maintains it. It refutes the arguments put forth by the Nyaya system to prove the existence of God. It has been argued that the universe is a substance consisting of parts, and therefore it cannot be an effect because, according to the Jain thought, a substance consisting of parts cannot be an effect. If the

universe is not an effect, there is no existence of its cause,God.[16]

It is further contended that even if for argument's sake it is accepted that the world is an effect, it does not follow that one God has produced it. If a society of bees can construct a bee- hive, a society of gods can create the universe.[17]

The Jains explain variety found in the world by the law of Karma (action). But they have no necessity of inventing any God as the Lord of Karma (karmadhyakshya).[18] If merits and demerits of beings are responsible for the latter's happiness or unhappiness, they alone are the masters and God ceases to be the Lord (anisvara).[19] It is also maintained that the eternal God cannot be considred to be the creator of the universe, because according to the Jain thought, if his different volitions are the cause of His different creations, then He ceases to be eternal.[20] Moreover, God cannot have any motive for creating the universe.[21] If God creates the universe by way of sport (krida), then His creative act is purposeless like the play of a child. If creation springs from His nature, then all effects may emanate from the nature of their causes, and the hypothesis of God becomes unnecessary. Therefore, according to the Jain Philosophy, God does not exist. God has thus no existence, and the qualities like eternity, ubiquity, independence, omnisciene and mercifulness etc. attributed to Him are also non-existent.

It may be added that although the Jain philosophy is critical about the concept of God and His existence, it believes in the basic and innate divinity of each soul. It also believes that it is possible for every s oul to realize its infinite knowledge, infinite perception, infinite bliss, and infinite power through self-effort. Thus, we find that much has been stated about the non-existence of God in heterodox systems of Indian philosophy.

The orthodox schools of Indian philosophy, however, on the whole accept 'the existence of God. According to the Nyaya and Vaisesika schools, God does exist. He is the Supreme Self (Paramatman) He is the ultimate cause of creation, maintenance and destruction of the universe. He, however,



does not create the universe out of nothing. He makes the world out of eternal atoms, space, time, ether, minds and souls. He is the builder of the universe rather than its creator. The universe is so made that the individual selves (jivatmans) enjoy and suffer according to the merit and demerit of their actions, and all physical obejcts serve as the means to the moral and spiritual ends of life. God is creator merely in the sense of being the first efficient cause of the universe, and not its material cause. God preseves the universe by His will. He destroys the world when the exigencies of morality require it. God is one, infinite and eternal. The world of space and time, minds and souls, does not limit Him, but is related to Him as his body. He is omnipotent, and yet He is guided in His activities by moral considerations of the merit and demerit of individual actions. He is omniscient, and therefore has full knowledge of all things and events. He has eternal consciousness. He is the master of six perfections (sadaisvarya) and is majestic, almighty, all-glorious, infinitely beautiful and full of infinite knowledge and perfect freedom from attachment.[22]

God is not only the efficient cause of the universe. He is also the directive cause of the actions of all living beings. Nobody is absolutely free. His actions are the result of divine will. God directs and guides every being to act in a specific manner. Man is merely an apparent doer of acts. In fact God is his directive cause (prayojaka karta). God is the moral governor of the universe. He is the impartial dispenser of the fruits of actions (karmaphaladata) performed by the individual souls. The Nyaya school attaches supreme importance to logic. The well-known Nyaya author Udayancharya has presented many arguments to prove the existence of God in his famous work Kusumanjali. He begins his work with the sentence "What doubt can there be in God, experience of whom is admitted throughout the world?"[23]

Uadayana then proceeds to put forth his arguments by stating

> "From effects, conjunction, support etc., from the use of things, from the authoritiativeness of the Vedas, from the composition of the Vedas, from sentences,

> and from particular numbers, an immutable all-knowing God can be deduced."

The first argument is the causal argument. The earth etc. must have a maker because they are effects (karya) like a pot. Everything that is composite in nature must have an intelligent cause. In the absence of such a cause, the material causes are quite unable to produce definite effects. To be this cause implies possessing direct knowledge of the material causes, a desire to realize some objective, and the power of will to accomplish this objective. God alone can be such a cause. The second proof is from conjunction. At the start of creation two atoms must join to form a molecule. Every work needs an intelligent agent. At the beginning of creation, when two atoms join together to form a dyad, even that, being a work, must require an intelligent agent. That is God.

The third proof is based on the consideration of inhibition of celestial bodies from fall. Just as a piece of wood is supported in space by a bird, in the same way, the world is withheld from falling down by some one's support. This some one is God.

The word 'adi' (etc.) denotes dissolution. God is the only entity that brings about the destruction of the world.

'From the use of things (pada) implies that there must be a teacher for teaching the use of things. It is a matter of our experience that the modern arts cannot be learnt unless the relevant knowledge is imparted. Therefore, for the traditional arts, that are prevalent for the past endless period, there must be an instructor. That instructor is God.

There is still another type of proof that is derived from the authoritativeness of the Vedas (pratyayatah). Vedic knowledge is authoritative like all valid knowledge. This authoritativeness must have a cause. That cause is God.

Second inference also emanates from the composition of the Vedas. The Vedas are composed by some person as Ayurveda is. The authorship of the Vedas cannot be ascribed to any one individual (human being). Therefore, the Vedas must have been composed by a supreme Being like God. An argument from number (samkhya-visesat) is also put forth to



prove the existence of God. According to this argument, the magnitude of the dyad is not by individual atoms;it depends on number, as atomic magnitude is eternal and extremely minute. But number needs the distinguishing perception (apeksa-buddhi) which must belong to somebody. The number two of the atoms that goes to form the dyad at the beginning of creation could not have been the object of our distinguishing perception. Therfore, the distinguishing perception existing at the beginning of creation must have been God's. Therfore God must exist. Udayana has accepted that the scriptures prove the existence of God independently.[25] However, the followers of the Nyaya school try to prove God's existence by the arguments that have been mentioned herein above.

The Vaisesika system too bases its faith in God on the foundations of inference and scriptures. There must be an active principle as the creator of the universe, independent of adrsta. This principle is God. God can be inferred as the author of the Vedas too.[26] The Yoga school also believes in the existence of God. According to it God is the supreme Person who is above all individual selves and is eternally free from all afflictions and imperfections.[27] He is the perfect spirit who is eternal, all pervading, omnipotent, and omniscient. He brings about the association and dissociation between Purusas or selves and Prakrti or matter, which, under the guidance of God, evolves and dissolves the world of objects in accordance with the moral deserts of individual selves. While the Nyaya-Vaisesika system holds that God creates, maintains and destroys the universe according to our moral deserts, the Yoga system holds that it is Prakrti that is inspired by God to create and destroy the world according to the merits and demerits of individual selves. Patanjali has described God as-

> "a particular spirit (Purusa) untouched by troubles, works, fruits or deserts."[28]

The next sutra of Patanjali states

> "In Him does the germ of omniscience become infinite."[29].

Everything that admits of comaprison or degree must have an acme. The knowledge of the past, present, and future existing in every human being to some extent is ultra-sensorial and can be considered to be the germ of omniscience. This germ of omniscience reaches the culmination point in some one. That some one is God. Thus, we have to accept the existence of God on the basis of inference. But the authentic nature of God cannot be grasped through any inference. God's real nature can be understood only through a study of scriptures alone. In this way the Yoga system is of the opinion that God's existence can be proved through the ways of both inference and authority.

The Samkhya system is generally considered atheistic in outlook. But Max Muller is of the opinion that:

> "denial of an Isvara or personal Lord did not probably form part of the original Samkhya, as presented in the Tattvamimamsa."[30]

Generally it is held that the earlier Samkhya was atheistic. Even some modern scholars hold this view.[31] The basis of this opinion is the philosophy of the Samkhya. The philosophy of the Samkhya is of the opinion that there are only two substances Purusa and the Prakrti. Purusa is pure consciousness and Prakrti is pure materality, a confluence of Satva, Rajas and Tamas. The universe evolves out of Prakrti alone and it is absorbed in Prakrti alone. Purusa has nothing to do with it. Because of ignorance, the Purusa considers itself bound with the world. Destruction of this ignorance implies emancipation. Thus, the Samkhya has no place for God. But it is worth noting that the Samkhya does not state directly that the God does not exist. Denial of God is not found in the Samkhya. It only declares that the existence of an eternal God cannot be established by proof.[32] The Samkhya accepts the popular gods, who are, however, merely more highly organized and happier beings than men and subject to the laws of samsara (world). It is stated that whenever the word 'Lord' (Isvara) is used in the scriptures, it is in reference to the liberated souls or these beings.[33]

But the later Samkhya does accept God in a very open



manner. Vijnana Bhiksu declares that it was for the sake of argument and to prove that God was no integral part of the system, and not to express its antagonism to theism that the early Samkhya had not included God in its philosophy.[34]

The Purva-Mimamsa is also stated to be atheistic according to the traditional view. According to this system, the universe has neither a beginning nor an end and therefore it does not require any creator. It is not possible for God to act even as a supervisor of dharma and adharma, as the followers of the Nyaya system hold, because merit and demerit belong to the performer, and God cannot have any knowledge about them. It is not possible for God to have conjunction with or inherence of dharma and adharma in Him, as conjunction is possible with substances and with qualities, which dharma and adharma are, and as they inhere in individual souls and cannot inhere in an extraneous God.[35] Perception, inference, and scriptures, according to this view, do not prove God. It may be added here that Max Muller and P.Shastri are of the view that Purva-Mimamsa rejects God only as creator of differences in the lots of beings, but not God as such.[36]

Whatever may be the view of the Purva-Mimamsa regarding God in the early period, we do find that the later Mimamsakas have a faith in God. Venkatesa wrote even a work bearing the title Sesvara-mimamsa. Apadeva and Laugaksi Bhaskar have expressed the view that if sacrifices performed are dedicated to God, they will lead to the highest good-nihsreyasa.[37]

When we turn to Uttara-Mimamsa, we find the thinkers like Sankara, Ramanuja, Vallabha, Nimbarka etc. All these thinkers believe in the Brahman as the highest reality in some way or the other, but differ in their details. Sankara believed that the Brahman is the only Reality and the whole world has only a phenomenal existence. Bhaskara wrote a commentary on the Brahmasutra, and propounded the doctrine of unity-and-difference (bhedabhedavada) in it. According to him, unity and plurality both are equally real. The Brahman is full of auspicious qualities, Brahman is God. He is transformed into the universe in his unconscious part. It

is not an appearance of Brahman.[38] It is a transformation of a part of the Brahman. In the causal state, the Brahman is one; but in the effected state It becomes many and manifold.[39] Reality is characterised by unity and diversity. The relation between the Brahman and the universe is that of difference as well as non- difference (identity).

Ramanuja, however does not support this view. He believes in unity as qualified by difference. He holds the view that the one Brahman, which is unique and unqualified, is in fact Visista Brahman. The entire world of sentient and non-sentient beings forms the part of Sarira (body) of the Brahman. Cit (sentient) and a-cit (non-sentient)-both are real. Brahman and Isvara are one and the same and neither is formless or devoid of difference. The Brahman possesses internal difference of soul and body.

Nimbarka believes in identity-and-difference. His system is called the theory of dualistic monism (dvaitadvaitavada). Like Bhaskar, he supports the doctrine of transformation of Brahman into the universe. There is some difference between Bhaskara and Nimbarka. The former emphasises identity between the Brahman and the individual selves, as their difference is merely due to limiting conditions (upadhi), while the latter stresses both identity as well as difference between them. The world and the universe are different from the Brahman because they have real and distinct existence dependent upon the Isvara.They are non- different from Brahman, because they cannot exist apart from Him. Nimbarka interprets 'tat tvam asi' as meaning that the individual soul is both different and non-different from God. The difference lies in the fact that the individual souls are the part, while the Brahman is the whole, the former are the worshippers while the latter is the worshipped. Non-difference between the individual souls and the Brahman is born from the fact that there is identity between them in their essential nature. We can also distinguish Nimbarka's theory from the doctrine of Ramanuja. Ramanuja recognised internal disctinction (svagata bheda) in the Brahman. For him, the Brahman is the qualified (visista) substance whose attributes (visesanas) or modes (prakaras) are the sentient



beings and the non-sentient existence i.e. the individual souls as well as the material existence. They constitute the body of God. Thus, there is an inseparable relation and connection between God, material world and the sentient beings. This inseparabae relation (aprthak-siddhi) makes them one whole. Ramanuja thus stresses identity and unity between the material world, the conscious beings, and God. But as against the view of Ramanuja, Nimbarka stresses identity as well as difference between the Brahman and the universe. The universe is the transformation of the conscious energy (cit-sakti) and the unconscious energy (acit-sakti) or Brahman. The would and the invididual souls are real and substantial in nautre; they are not mere adjectives of Brahman who is the inner controller of the former. In fact the individuals, material world and God are co- eternal. The only difference is that God is the controller of the other two.

Madhva has his own views to offer in this context. He preaches the doctrine of dualism. He holds the view that the five distinctions between God and the individual soul, God and matter, the individual soul and matter, one individual soul and another, and one material thing and another, are eternal and real. God is the supreme Person who is variously called Narayana, Visnu, Hari etc., God is the absolutely independent being, on whom all other things and beings are absolutely dependent. He is free from all imperfections and has all good and glorious qualities like infinite power and infinite mercy to an unlimited extent. Essentially, He is infinite existence, consciousness and bliss incarnate,[40] and resides in His heavenly abode (goloka) with His consort Laxmi, who is pesonification of His power. He manifests Himself in various forms and incarnations. He is the lord of all beings and the creator, preserver, and destroyer of all things and beings. He is the Lord of gods and the only ruling authority of the universe.

God creates the world out of the primal matter called the Prakrti which is an eternal and unconscious substance. God is therefore only the efficient cause of the world. However, it is under His control and guidance that Prakrti, the material cause, evolves the universe. God controls and guides Prakrti

of the Uttara Mimamsa give utmost importance to the cult of devotion. Even Sankara gives due importance to devotion, but adds that Isvara has merely vyavaharika satta (existence from the practical standpoint). Looked from the standpoint of view of practical life, God is the cause, the creator, the sustainer and the destroyer of the universe. He is an omniscient and omnipotent being. He possesses all good qualitites (saguna). He is the object of worship. However, these descriptions do not give us the essential nature, real nature (svarupalaksana) of God; these are merely accidential and relative (tatasthalaksana) of the Real and do not give us any idea about Its real nature. If we are able to transcend the stage of empirical life, we come across the real nature of the ultimate Reality, which is really speaking, existence, consciousness, and bliss (saccidananda). This is the real nature (svarupalaksana) of the Real. But really speaking, even this description fails to describe the Real adequately, because essentially It is indeterminate or characterless (nirguna) and is as such beyond words and language. It is a matter of direct realization (aparoksa anubhuti) and not of description and discussion.

It may be further noted that even though Sankara makes a distinction between a lower and a higher standpoint and states that God is the object of worship only from the lower standpoint, yet he never underestimates the importance of such worship. He holds that only through the lower standpoint it is possible for an individual to rise slowly and gradually to the highest point. The utility of worshiping God is clearly accepted, as. such worship purifies the heart and prepares an individual to realize the highest Truth.

In the Western philosophy, too, we find different concepts of God. For example, we have Deism, Theism, Pantheism, Panentheism, Polytheism and Monotheism.

Deism makes the following assumptions.[43]

1. Creation is in time. God is eternal. But He creates the universe in time.
2. God is the First Cause. He puts the necessary forces into the world at the time of creation. These are the secondary forces or causes.



3. After creation, God remains outside the world. He is transcendent. Personal relation with Him is not possible. But He can interfere in the working of the world whenever it is necessary to do so. Theism comes from the Greek word 'theos' meaning God. Theism implies belief in a Personal God, a God with whom a devotee can come into an intimate personal relation. Theism holds that God is both transcendent as well as immanent.

Pantheism comes from two Greek words-'Pan' meaning 'all' and 'Theos' meaning God. According to this theory, all is God and God is all. The universe and God are idential.

Pantheism implies that God is all and yet He trascends the creation and is therefore not exhausted by the world. Pantheism tries to reconcile theism and pantheism. God is neither the world, nor outside the world. But the world is in Him and He extends much beyond the limis of the universe.

In the Western philosophy, SpinoZa is a representative of Pantheism, while Hegel is a representative of Panentheism. Usually the doctrine of Theism is acceptable to the persons who believe in God, whether they belong to the East or the West. The Nyaya-Vaisesika, the Yoga, the later Sankhya, Ramanuja, Madhava etc. are theists. But Sankara, Vallabha and Nimbarka believe in Panentheism.

Deism has been criticized because it implies that God created the universe out of nothing. Logically it is not possible that something (the universe) can be produced out of nothing. Moreover, besides being logically weak, this doctrine implies that God is outside the universe. How can a devotee who wants to have constant proximity of the Lord accept a theory like this? Such a theory cannot inspire any faith and confidence in human heart. Pantheism fails to explain the variety that we find present in the universe. Moreover, if we accept this theory the suffering and evil present in the world shall also affect God. Morality shall lose its basis, as everything that we find present in the world is just God alone. From the standpoint of religion and devotion,

too, the theory is not satisfactory, as there is no personal God according to this theory. Moreover, if God is present in the form of world, He comes too close, and the only relation that can be present between the Lord and his devotee would be the relation of identity. Panentheism is a much better doctrine, if we compare it with pantheism because God becomes both transcendent and immanent, according to this doctrine. But the problem of evil or suffering together with the problem of explaining the necessity of morality become very dominant here. Of course, if we follow Sankara and treat the universe as false, meta physically then these problems shall not arise.

The problem of evil as a matter of fact cannot be solved in any other manner. Ignorance of the Truth is the root cause of suffering. This ignorance can be destroyed only by inculcating the real knowledge. When one realizes that one is not distinct from the Brahman, and the Brahman is the sole Reality of the universe, the world disappears and with it disappears the problems of suffering and evil too. One is then not only relieved from every kind of suffering, one experiences the highest form of joy i.e. the bliss that cannot be excelled in any way at any time and is eternal in nature (niratisayananda). When one leaves the plane of will and one goes to the plane of knowledge, one realizes the Truth. The ontological identity of the Self and the Brahman is realized then. When the duality is destroyed, the problem of evil too vanishes. The fact is that the evil is only interwoven in the texture of the world, and it can be transcended only through an inner realization of the ultimate Truth. Evil is found in the Mayika world. When the Maya is destroyed, the evil too is destroyed. It is futile to attempt an explanation of the evil at the empirical level. The mystery of the evil and suffering can be ended only by going beyond the world, by exceeding one's usual self. This is the way pointed out by Sankara. And rationally speaking, this is the only way in which the problem of evil and suffering can be logically and actually solved.[44]

Theism satisfies the demands of religion and devotion. By making God omnipotent and omniscient, it is able to explain the creation of the universe. As Vallabha has stated, the universe is only the Lila of the Lord. World is divine sport. God Himself is playing with Himself in the form of the universe. So long as one is unable to understand it, the problem of the world persists. But once this Lila is understood, one is able to realize the Truth and all problems vanish. Theism believes in the efficacy of devotion and worship. Union with God can be another way of realizing the Truth. God's grace makes the task of the individual soul easier. That very state which a person of knowledgee gets after strenuous efort; a person of devotion obtains very smoothly and conveniently. Theism believes in Personal God. This makes the doctrine very acceptable to the common man.[45]



Like India, as we have seen, the West too has given us various arguments to prove the existence of God. However, Sankara has righlty stated that the Ultimate Reality cannot be realized through reason.[46]

Sankara has given us the surest way of proving the existence of God. A doubter cannot doubt his own existence at least. No doubter can deny his own self.That is why, Descartes declared cogito ergo sum. The self is the knower. He cannot be known through the usual methods of knowledge. The Supreme Reality and the Self are one.[47] Since one cannot doubt the existence of oneself, therefore, one cannot doubt the existence of the Brahman. One should try to realize God through inner realization. Intuition should be relied upon, and not argumentation. Swami Vivekananda has tried to state this very thing by declaring.

> "He (God) is the witness, the eternal witness of all knowledge. Whatever we know, we have to know in and through Him. He is the essence of our own self. He is the essence of our ego, this 'I', and we cannot know anything except in and thorugh that 'I'.... Therefore, you have to know everything in and through Brahman...neither known nor unknown, but something infinitely higher than either."[48] And finally he declared "I have realized the Self; I have seen God"[49]

Direct experience of the Reality is the only logically valid proof of God's existence. It is not justfiable to accept God only if our traditional logic is able to prove His existence. It is forgotten that God is Infinite, while our reasoning faculty is limited to the universe of material objects. In Indian Philosophy, mind is considered material in nature. Intelligence too is material. Both intelligence (buddhi) and mind (manas) are the product of Prakrti (matter). The function of mind is to gather the sensations received through senses organs like eyes, ears, touch, taste etc. and send them to intelligence for reflection and knowledge. Our sense organs cannot receive any sensation of superhuman being. Hence, how is it possible to pass any judgement about anything that transcends the physical world? Our intelligence can know a little bit of the Supreme only through loftier form called intuition, which does not lie within the confines of ordinary logical faculty. What can be known through smelling can be known through nose, what can be known through perception can be known through eyes, in the same way what can be known throguh intuition, can be known only through our intuitive faculty. One cannot weigh a piece of gold through the weights meant for weighing iron. One celebrated poet of Hindi, whose name was Bihari had written

'Regandhi mati-andha tu, itara dihavata kahi
kari phulela ko acamana, mitho kahata sarahi

(O you, a dealer in the perfumes, you are a fool. You are showing your pefume to a person who has taken a sip of your perfume and then is trying to praise it by saying that it is sweet.)

The supreme Truth in this manner cannot be known by every Tom, Dick and Harry. Only a person having a potentiality of knowing it can understand it. Even secrets of physical science cannot be understood by every person. Only a person having a scientific bent of mind and knowing the methodology of science can grasp scientific truth. Supreme Truth which is too subtle even for ordinary physical science cannot be grasped by an ordinary person, who has not acquired the necessary competence to understand it.

Shri Aurobindo has rightly stated "The knowledge of



God is not to be gained by weighing the feeble arguments of reason for or against His existence;it is to be gained only by self- transcending and absolute consecration, aspiration and experience."[50]

Shri Aurobindo makes the point more meaningful in his Savitri. The following words shall prove it.

"But all is screened, subliminal, mystical;

It needs the intuitive heart, the inward turn,

It needs the power of a spiritual gaze.

Else to our waking mind's small moment look

A goalless voyage seems our dubious course

Some chance has settled or hazarded some will,

Or a Necessity without aim or cause

Unwillingly compelled to emerge and be."

That is why the Indian philosophy believes that the Supreme Truth is neither a matter of discussion nor a subject of argumentation.

It is a matter of inward direct realization.

The Vedic seer wrote from his own experience:

"I have seen the vision,
The vision of mine revealing itself
Coming out from within me."

Shelley also said:

"The awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats, though unseen, among us visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower,
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain showetr,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and contenance.

But that inner Real can be known only through one's own sincere longing. Kabira, a noted Hindi mystic poet has decalred

"When I hear of a fish in the water dying of thirst, it makes me laugh.

If it be true that the infinite Brahman pervades all space.

What is the meaning of the places of pilgrimage like Mathura or Kasi."

The Sureme Truth is not for them who put their sole faith in logical faculty, which is suited only for our ordinary world. A Vaisnava poet has rightly lamented

Alas, a jeweller has come into the flower garden.

He wants to appraise the truth of a lotus by rubbing it against his touchstone.

God can be known only through inner faith and love. An inner experience is the most reliable proof of the Supreme. Let others lacking an inner longing and faith waste their time and energy in fruitless logical pursuits.

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# 5

# Significance of the Bhakti

While the philosophers, logicians and scientists have sometimes tried to quarrel about the "proofs" pointing to the existence of God, the vast bulk of humanity right from the dawn of its existence invariably pinned its faith on some God Indeed for a man of faith:

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life a star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from a far:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home:"[1]

Or

he would exclaim:
"God shall be my hope,
My stay, my guide and lantern to my feet."[2]

Yes, a man of faith has full faith in the existence of God, and faith, according to Tolstoy,

"is the sense of life, that sense by virtue of which man does not destroy himself but continues to live on."[3]

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"is the sense of life, that sense by virtue of which man does not destroy himself but continues to live on."[3]

The fact is that even the "arguments" to prove the existence of God were found "deficient or insufficient" only by those who, to be frank, lack an element of faith. "The truth is" states William James

> "that in the metaphysical and religious sphere, articulate reasons are cogent for us only when our inarticulate feelings of reality have already been impressed in favour of the same conclusion."[4]

Faith is the salt of human life. It gives tone and colour not only to religion and philosophy; it also inspires man to rise to achieve the most desirable fruits of temporal life and keep the light of confidence burning even when he is surrounded by darkness from all sides. That is why Thomas Hardy has sung the glory of the men of 'faith and fire':

> "What of the faith and fire within us
> Men who march away

Ere the barncocks say

Night is growing gray,

Leaving all that here can win us?"[5]

and Wordsworth expresses appreciation for a person

> "One in whom persuasion and belief had ripened into faith"[6]

What is called devotion or 'bhakti' is simply the most intense form of this faith. Bhakti implies loving God absolutely.[7] It is clear that when one loves the Supreme from the bottom of one's heart, one is bound to be a completely transformed man. A person who loves the Limitless[8] is bound to rise above the temptations of this mundane life. He surrenders his ego to the Godhead and this surrender of the ego raises him to the topmost position of spiritual character. He becomes nonattached to the worldly possessions, ceases to hate or quarrel with anybody, becomes so fearless that he is not afraid of any might, and has a fountain of sympathy and fellow feeling for all the beings. A devotee is an ideal of spiritual elevation and social dedication. The eternal and supreme effulgence of the Divine Light illumines his life, with the result that dismal darkness of sensuality and sense-enjoyment is dispersed for good. He perceives God alone. Nay, every thought and every act of his is a service rendered to God; for the heavenly Light of God dawns in him.



Three ways of God realization:

There are chiefly speaking three ways of realizing the Godhead or the Supreme Truth. These ways have been known as the way of Jnana (knowledge), the way of devotion (bhakti) and the way of rituals (karma). Though this classification of pathways of truth realization is peculiar to Indian opinion and thought, it is not peculiar to India alone. In fact these pathways are universal in character and are found everywhere in the East and the West. The universality of this classification is rooted in the fact that it is based on psychological truth. Psychologically human mind is an inter-play of cognition, affection and conation. No human act is free from the traces of these factors which are intermingled and intertwined.

Let us take an example to illustrate this point. Suppose I see a rose flower in a garden. Now this act of perception of the rose flower has three distinct elements of cognition, affection, and conation. But these elements are not noticed by an average man unless he tries to undertake the analysis of this act of perception. It would be clear, if an analysis of the perception of the rose flower by me is undertaken, that the act, firstly, contains an element of cognition because I recognise the flower as rose flower alone, having its existence in my presence. Then, secondly, the flower being a lovely one, fills my heart with a feeling of pleasure. I feel that it is beautiful. And thirdly, I may try to have it which would constitute the conative aspect of the act.

Much like the perception or the rose flower or anything else of this world, a person who tries to approach God may reveal all the three processes of cognition, affection, and conation. When he recognizes the Brahman or God as the Supreme Truth, it is no doubt the cognitive process. When he loves that Truth, it is an affective process; and finally, when he tries to attain the Truth, it is a conative process. Thus, every act of attainment of the Supreme is constituted

by cognitive, affective, and conative factors. The matter, however, does not end here. Every act of realizing the Supreme is not marked by a fixed proportion of cognition, affection, and conation. In fact it is impossible to find in such a process any fixed proportion of every element. The Nature rejoices in mixing different proportions of cognition, affection, and conation in every act of perception. The result is that there would be cases where the element of cognition would be dominant; there would be another set of cases where affection would be dominant; and there would be a third set of cases where the element of conation shall be outstanding.

Where the element of knowledge is outstanding, the process of attaining the Supreme, has been popularly and scripturally called the Path of Knowledge. Shankara is an outstanding example of this Path of Knowledge. He declares that 'the knower of Brahman attains the Supreme'. Similarly, where the element of affection is dominant, the process of attaining the Supreme has been popularly and scripturally termed, the Path of Devotion. The Bhagavadgita, the Bhagavata Purana and many other works have advocated that the Supreme can be realized through devotion.[10] But where a person develops an idea that the rituals alone can help him in attaining the Truth, the path followed by him is called the Path of Rituals. The Mimamsa school of Indian Philosophy, and the Brahmanas proclaim this type of opinion.[11]

As we have already stated above there can be difference in the proportion in which the elements of cognition, affection, and conation are combined; but it is impossible to eliminate any one of these elements totally. Thus, even a man of knowledge has attachment for his ideal and indulges in certain activity like reading works like the Upanisads and the Brahma Sutras. Even a devotee has this knowledge that his beloved is the Supreme, and he does those acts like worshipping Him, reciting his name etc. to please Him. The follower of the Path of Rituals too, has this knowledge that his acts can purify him, and he loves his scriptures and their commandments, and follows the path chalked out for him.

The question arises; where does the difference arise



then? the difference consists in giving supreme importance to a particular element. But the very fact that these three paths are built up from the same type of the raw material to an extent, despite the difference of emphasis on one factor, makes it evident that it would be, a mistake to draw a line of absolute demarkation between them. That is why the follower of the path of Knowledge may be lost in the wilderness and may degenerate into a ritualist if he is not on his guard. After all what shall we call a person who merely recites the Bhagavadgit, and reads the Upanisads, but misses their import totally? He is a ritualist.

In the same manner, a follower of devotion, if he is not inspired by a true love, may fall to a ritualist's position. A person who merely worships his idol, and dances and sings before it, but lacks the divine lover's lofty passion and urge, is nothing better than a ritualist.

But why should we allot a lower position to ritualism? Ritualism can be helpful only in the initial stages. Just as a child imitates his elder's actions without understanding their meaning, a ritualist merely carries out the Vedic injunctions without caring to go deep into their meaning. And if a person wishes to remain at this elementary stage through out his life, we shall have to say that he has not been able to move in the direction of progress. Ritualism is bad from this point of view alone.

When we try to compare the Path of Knowledge with the Path of Devotion, we have to be very careful. If one happens to be a follower of the Path of knowledge, one would assert that the Path of knowledge is superior to the Path of devotion. On the contrary, if one were a follower of the Path of Devotion, one would assert the superiority of devotion over knowledge. I am of the opinion that a comparison of this kind would not be fair and desirable. If one were to ask us, which is superior, the mind or the heart, I for one, would declare that the question is quite undesirable. It is just like asking which is superior, the leg or the arm? Now the leg does a specific type of work, and the arm is used for some other kind of work. Both are important from their own points of view. Similarly, mind is suited for a specific type of work viz. think-

ing. Heart is the seat of feeling. Thinking and feeling both are important mental processes from the point of view of human psychology. We can neither ignore thinking process, nor can we neglect feeling process.

If we try to ponder over the relationship of knowledge with devotion, in the context of the importance of both thinking and feeling processes, we shall be able to do justice with both of them.

There are persons who love to think. They are intellectuals and try to think out the things logically and scientifically. When such persons enter in the domain of search after the Supreme Truth, they prove to be the lovers of the path of Knowledge. On the other hand, there are persons who are essentially persons of sentiments and feelings. They are susceptible to the various feelings like love, friendship, separation pangs etc. When such persons enter into the region of the seekers of the Supreme, they have a natural tendency of considering God either as their Saviour, or Protector, or Father or any thing else of the kind. So ultimately it is a question of one's temperament and liking. It is improper to state that one particular path is superior to the other path. As a matter of fact even a man of knowledge has to call forth the co-operation of faith, and even a person following the path of devotion has to seek light from knowledge. Knowledge without feeling and faith has no strength, and faith without knowledge is blind. We need both mind and heart to lead a happy and sensible life.

The Indian thinkers have always remembered this fact even in the realm of a search for the Supreme. For example, the Bhagavata specifically states that the Supreme Reality, which is Non-dual in nature, has been understood sometimes as the Brahman, sometimes as the Great Soul, and sometimes as God.[12] If the Supreme is grasped by the intellectual method, he appears as the Absolute; but if It is grasped by the devotional process, He appears to be God. We find, therefore, that despite his emphasis on knowledge, Sankara had liking for devotion[13], and despite its emphasis on devotion, the Bhagavata values knowledge.[14]



While the differentiation by calling the three processes of the realization of the Supreme Truth as the Path of Knowledge, the Path of Devotion, and the Path of Action is no doubt useful for describing the specific, typical approaches, it should never be thought that they are exclusive. At the same time, it should be fully understood that out of the three paths, the most popular and convenient way of attaining the Supreme can be the Path of Devotion alone.

We have already seen that the Path of Action lies at the lowest level as at this stage a person merely carries out the Vedic injunctions. But when, he transcends this stage, he either lands in the region of knowledge, or in the domain of devotion, depending on his liking and temperament. But it has to be admitted that very few persons are adequately equipped to proceed successfully in the realm of knowledge. It can appeal only to a handful of persons in whom the intellectual tendency is fully awake and alive.

The fact is that intellectual knowledge alone can never be able to guide human destiny in the storm and stress of life. Knowledge can only point out to a path, the goal to be obtained. But to pursue that path, to strive for the attainment of that goal demands the vigour of emotional life. The incompetence of knowledge in guiding a man effectively on the right path was duley exposed by Duryodhana, the villain of the Mahabharata, when he declared :

> "I know what is what is religion, but I have no propensity to follow it; I know what is irreligion, but I cannot run away from it."[15]

Most of the people are like Duryodhana. They know that stealing is bad, and yet they steal the valuables; they know that a particular piece of conduct is legally and morally untenable, but they do commit that crime. Really speaking, a follower of knowledge has to lead a very puritanic life, a life that demands a sublimation of human instincts. But to subjugate the natural impulses is a very tough job for an average man. Therefore, the path of knowledge is strewn with many pitfalls. That is why the Bhagavadgita states that the path of knowledge is very tough and difficult.[16] The Katha

Upanisad declares that this path of knowledge is sharp as the edge of a razor, hard to cross, and difficult to tread.[17]

Moreover, from the point of view of human psychology, the path of knowledge does not suit the common mould of human mind. The path of knowledge demands a virtual eradication of the human feelings. But human mind is a complex of cognitive, affective, and conative tendencies. The eradication of our affective tendencies is fraught with danger. A person who is unaffected by sentiments and emotions, is virtually no better than a moving stone. Then, if impulses are checked too much they may result in the development of abnormality or may blow away a man from his cherished path, if they become too strong for want of an adequate normal expression. Shri Bhagavati Charan Varma, a noted novelist of Hindi literature, has portrayed such a character in his famous novel 'Chitralekha'. A story of corruption prevailing in the temples and churches shall reveal many such characters.

One additional difficulty of the path of knowledge is that it requires a person to fix his mind on the abstract Absolute. A person who is a fresh entrant in the domain of knowledge shall find it impossible to concentrate his attention on an abstract Absolute. The celebrated Hindi poet Surdas has put a very pertinent query: 'Where does this Absolute reside? Who are Its parents etc.? What is Its complexion.? What type of dress it puts on?" and then he significnatly adds:

> "It is impossible to fix our mind on an entity which is devoid of form, colour etc. and our mind shall ramble in the absence of such fixed and definite features which alone can help us in imagining our God."[18]

And finally he exclaims:

> "The ways of the Absolute are unknowable."[19]

Goswami Tulasidas, the most prominent poet of Hindi literature and a great scholar of Hindu philosophy and religion, had once reprihanded a mendicant who was asking for alms by uttering 'Alakha Niranjana' by saying:

> "O fool, instead of trying to see the Imperceptible, recite the Rama Nama."[20]



This type of criticism of the path of Knowledge was not peculiar to the scholars of the old past alone. Even in our own time Radhakrishnan complains:

> "The Absolute of Samkara rigid and motionless, and totally lacking in initiative or influence, cannot call forth our worship."[21]

Attention to still another fact of human psychology may be drawn here. Even without going into the details of the origin of religion we can easily understand that God was invented because of the psychological factors of human personality. Just as McDougall has drawn our attention towards the parental instinct, along with other thirteen instincts, we can coin a corresponding infantile instinct-an instinct of dependence. Wherever and whenever an individual finds himself in distress or difficulty, he cries for help. He needs a power which can sustain him in the hours of trials and tribulations, storm and stress. Jung has in fact explained religion as a process of infantile dependence in his work 'Psychology of the Unconscious'.[22] Voltaire rightly observed:

"If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him" (Si Dieu n'existait pas, il foudrait l'inventer.) And Radhakrishnan repeats the same thing when he declares that the human mind has a craving for "the living sense of companionship... in their difficult times."[23]

Faith in God gives to the individuals a much-needed protector and to the society a power that has the tendency and capacity of eradicating the forces of darkness, and brings the light of goodness and piety, order and system on the earth. Radhakrishnan is right when he declares that "theism has implicit in it the social hope."[24]

Devotion being a path of faith scores over knowledge on all these points. It gives to an individual God who is omnipotent and omniscient, and who is beauty incarnate-God. who is an inexhaustible source of strength, energy, grace, virtues and goodness. It spiritualizes the instincts, ennobles the impulses, and sublimates the natural tendencies. Devotion does not destroy natural human urges, it merely trans-

forms them, gives them new shape, and something that is destructive in character is turned into something quite constructive. Devotion, as it were, exhorts people to transcend the realm of sensuality and selfishness, not by the long, and winding road of knowledge, but by the bye lane of faith. Liberation which appears almost like a luxury when sought merely through the pathway of knowledge, becomes an easy and realizable ideal when the path of devotion is accepted. Even knowledge is diluted and made available to one and all throught the path of faith and devotion. That is why even Kabir, who was illiterate, could preach messages bristling with wisdom. Devotion inspires even a weak individual and a powerful society to wage a war of progress with undimmed courage and unparalleld confidence. Thus, Devotion works miracles both in the domain of individual health and upliftment, as well as in the realm of social achievements and attainments. Vivekananada has clearly stated that devotion is the easiest thing for the human beings.

> "Bhakta has to float on smoothly with the currents of our nature."[25]

Indian thought is alive to the desirability of the path of Devotion from the very beginning. The Katha Upanisad proclaimed that the ultimate self cannot be realized either by much eradition or intellectual effort alone.[26] It was made clear from the very outset that one can realize the Supreme even through sincere devotion and a surrender of one's acts and deeds to Him.[27] Patanjali, who otherwise has raised a complex structure of rigid discipline for realizing God, has clearly stated this very fact by declaring: "Isvara Pranidhanadva".[28] And Radhakrishnan has, as it were, made an attempt at proving the worth of the process of devotion by observing:

> "Human intellect is quite incapable of making reliable statements of a sphere which is beyond its scope. But the human heart is quite capable of responding to the Spirit."[29]

Sometimes it is thought that devotion is either incompatible with or distinct from knowledge. Such a view is totally



untenale. Devotion is not antithetical to knowledge. Though the paths of knowledge and devotion appear to be different and even divergent in the beginning; but ultimately they coalesce. The paths meet, and there comes a time when the devotion and knowledge become identical in the form of realization of the Supreme.[30]

> "There is not really", states Vivekananda "so much difference between knowledge (jnana) and love (bhakti) as people sometimes imagine."[31]

Elucidating the concept of bhakti, Dr. N.K. Brahma has stated that it lies midway betwen Jnana and Karma.

> "The Bhakti line of Sadhana lies intermediate between Jnana and Karma."writes Dr. Brahma," It does not, like Karma, rely entirely upon the lower processes and seek to control the higher by the lower; nor like Jnana, does it solely rest upon the transcendent functioning of reason. It seeks to elevate human consciousness through the divine emotion of love which subdues all lower passions and impulses. Love can perform all that higher reason can command, if not more, and all this is done with ease and spontaneity. Bhakti combines law with love, vidhi (obligatory rites and processes) with rage (spontaneous love), and thus it seeks help from body and its processes also. Madhusudana Saraswati has rightly observed that Bhakti is closely allied to both karma and Jnana, and that it removes all obstacles. As it combines both forms of Sadhana, viz. controlling the higher by the lower and also the lower by the higher-it also achieves its end quickly."[32]

It is clear, therefore, that Bhakti is not antithetical to Jnana; devotion is not quite incompatible with knowldge.

## ORIGIN OF BHAKTI:

Having studied the role of Bhakti or devotion in the process of realization of the Supreme, it would be worthwhile to find out how this concept of devotion came into being.

We all know that God is as old as humanity. And the origin of God lies in what has been called by Dr. S. N. Dasgupta the instinct of religion. Yes, religion can be called an instinct because human mind is so constituted by nature that it must believe in the existence of a Superhuman Power. The primitive man, naked and helpless, must have seen at the mountains and rivers, stars and, the sun and the moon, the periodic passage of seasons, the clouds that would pour rains, and must have wondered that there must be a power that controls them. It is clear that instincts need neither reason nor education for their fruition. They are inborn structures found universely. R.S. Woodworth has stated that 'Instinct is best defined as unlearned behaviour."[33]

McDougall has tried to define an instinct as.

> "an inherited or innate psycho-physical disposition which determines its possessor to perceive, and to pay attention to, objects of a certain class, to experience an emotional excitement of a particular quality upon perceiving such an object, and to act in regard to it in a particular manner, or, at least, to experience, an impulse to such action."

Let it be added that the theory of instincts is not a universally acknowledged theory at present. Many scholars have criticized it. For example, R.G. Collingwood writes:

> "The word 'instinct', though often used by persons who think they are using it scientifically, is not a scientific term. It properly means anything that is implanted in a man:properly, therefore, it is a wholly unscientific omnibus-word for any element in 'human nature."[34]

But there cannot be any doubt about the fact that there are certain impulses present in man which are innate and inborn and are present almost universally in human species. Religion is such an innate tendency. As we have already stated human mind cannot rest contended without a faith in some super-human power. Browning wrote in his "Francis Furini":

> Though Master keeps aloof,



> Signs of his presence multiply from roof
> To basement of the building.

Yes, the primitive man must have been led to the thought of God by these "sings of His presence." The sun would rise and set at the proper time every day, the clouds would bring only rain water, fire would give a sensation of warmth alone, the man would be born, become young and energetic, would grow old, and finally he would die. These were the phenomena which must have persuaded the primitive man to have faith in some power. The various natural phenomena like the morning, the dusk etc. worshipped by the Rigveda point to this fact alone. These natural sights appeared to the primitive man gods, and thus the beginning of the god worship is marked by the gods embodied in the form of natural powers.

"The gods of the Rig Veda are mostly, if not entirely, personifications of the powers of nature." writes Shakuntala rao Shastri, "The mystery of the world around them deeply stirred the Aryan mind at an early age. The beauty and grandeur of nature awakened their profound enthusiasm and admiration, and in the striking phenomena of the heavens and the earth they saw the manifestation of some higher powers."[35]

W.E. Hocking too appears to agree with this point of view when he writes:

> "Religion, let us say, is the habitual reference of life to divine powers: to the primitive view these powers thought invisible are indubitably there.'[36]

There cannot be any doubt that religion began in this very manner and God who was born out of such thinking processes and speculations was turned into the Absolute subsequently by the logical-minded philosophy.

And as

> "Religion is not merely faith in an impersonal principle of conservation, but confidence in the 'Friend behind phenomena who cares for us and who has the

power and the will to carry our efforts to victorious ends,"[37]

Faith as old as man. Considered from this point of view, faith is older than knowledge in the sense in which the latter is understood now a days.

There are persons who think that wonder, or fear or some such factor is responsible for the birth of religion and God. But it would be more correct to say that religion is the product of faith. I think this very fact has been accepted even by Collingwood in his characteristic manner:

"The ancients said that fear made the gods:and this old error has been refurnished of late with general applause by Rudolf Otto. Writes Collingwood,

> "The first notion of a god which arises untaught in every man's mind is much older than fear. It is born of hunger. It is the notion of what a hungry man is pursuing:the infinitely magnified image of himself. From this crude beginning the idea of God has a long path to travel:but it never loses its first features. No religion quite forgets that, whatever else its God may be, he is first and foremost the infinite satisfaction of man's hunger:man himself became omnipotent."[38]

Making the point more clear, He adds: "This is the religion of satisfied love, or love that hopes to be satisfied. It is the 'feeling of dependence' that Schleiermacher identified with religion in general."[39]

We find thus that faith is the mother of religion. It is faith that inspires a man secretly to invent the idea that there must be a power lying behind the world, who controls it, and rules it. Subsequently, the original concept of god was given a clearer and more magnified content. The process went on and on and in course of time the god of the Primitive Man became the Absolute of the man of knowledge.

Browne is, therefore, wrong when he asserts:

> "In the beginning there was fear;and fear was in the heart of man.....Earth and sea and sky were set



> against him;with relentless enmity, with inexplicable hate, they were bent on his destruction."[40]

Similarly, E.Durkhiem, who declares that religion is nothing but "the sentiment inspired by the group in its members."[41] is also wrong. His very definition of religion as

> "a unified system of belief and practices relative to sacred things; that is to say, things set apart and forbidden-beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community, called a church, all those who adhere to them."[42]

is quite confusing. Religion is actually a process of transformation of life in the light of the Superhuman. In the primitive stage, religion is a feeling of dependence upon the unseen powers which control our destiny, accompanied by a desire to come into friendly relations with them.

E.B. Tylor in his work 'Primitive Culture' advocated the theory of animism as the basis for the belief in spiritual entities. From mistaken inferences, from observation of such phenomena as dreams, trances, visions, diseases and deaths, transformed to the natural order, the sun, stars, trees, rivers, winds, clouds and other natural entities became animated by a soul or spirit and performed their special functions in the universe as though they were so many men or animals. Tylor is of the opinion that by and by, instead of a separate spirit for every individual, some people came to conceive of a god of wood in general, or god of clouds in general, and so on. By a further generalization and abstraction these many localized and departmentalized gods were disposed of and their places were taken by more comprehensive powers, often of an abstract nature.

This animistic theory was accepted by Herbert Spencer with certain modification. He was of the opinion that

> "religion originated primarily in the ghost fear."[43]

He Maintained that the origin and development of the concept of Deity were the result of the propitiation, worship, and deification of the dead persons who were held in high esteem by the society in their life time. Having been regarded with the awe and reverence during their life-time, after their

death, their spirits were venerated and propitiated. In course of time their veneration resulted into an established worship that went on from one generation to the other. He held, still further, that the

> "deceased tribal heroes, who in life had distinguished themselves by extraordinary mental and physical powers, eventually came to be revered as gods for their ghosts were believed to be very powerful. The belief in deities originated in this manner."[44]

Even if we accept this Animistic Theory, we shall have to accept the fact that at the root of this concept lies the element of faith. If this factor of faith is denied, the whole structure of the theory shall topple down. An acceptance of this theory implies that faith is the fountainhead of religion.

Sometimes the theory of fear is put forward to explain the origin of religion. Roman Philosopher and poet Lucretius can be called the first powerful exponent of the theory. British philosopher David Hume also extended his support to this theory in his work "Natural History of Religion".[45] He too held that the fear of natural forces led man to the belief in deities. It was thought that these deities manipulated the nature and, therefore, if they are pleased, they can intervene on behalf of the worshiper. Thus, if the deities are pleased by a person, no harm can be done by any power. German scholar F. Maxmuller also accepted this very approach. he maintained that

> "all men have a longing for the gods."[46]

The basis of religion lies, according to him, in man's awe in the presence of extraordinary and terrifying natural phenomena. In the modern period G.L. Berry has come forward to support this theory of fear

> "Religion had its birth in the fears of early man." writes Berry, "Among most of the earliest pirmitives there were two kinds of spirits only-hostile spirits and neutral ones. Only later came a belief in good or helpful forces, and the idea of God."[47]

We have already stated that this theory of fear cannot account for the birth of religion, unless we presume that the



feeling of faith preexisted in the hearts of the primitives. People had faith that the gods of rains or rivers etc. can harm them, therefore, they experienced some fear in their hearts. Some theorists have advanced the theory of wonder to explain the rise of religion. In wonder we feel some sort of discrepancy between the 'seen' and the 'expected'. The primitive man must have been wonder-struck to find that the sun rises only from a particular direction. Other phenomena of nature, similarly, must have excited wonder in the minds of the primitives. This is the position adopted by the theory of wonder. Shedding further light on this theory, Dr. S.N. Dasgupta has given illustration of the Vedic men.

> "To their primitive minds, motion only appeared to belong to life, and they attributed the changing phenomena of nature to living deities presiding over the diverse forces." writes Dasgupta, "Having presumed them to be deities, they naturally regarded them as being mightier than man. They attributed particular characters to these deities, and worshipped them. The materials of worship were the food that they themselves ate. They immolated animals and offerred them to their gods and partook of them by way of satisfying the gods."[48]

But again this theory of wonder rests on the foundation of human faith. No amount of wonder can lead to the rise of any religion till the chord of faith is touched. If we presume merely the phenomenon of wonder, we shall not be able to arrive at religion. The logical conclusion of wonder would be pursuing the matter further and farther, and making logical faculty more and more active and awake. On the other hand, "The suppositions of these beings behind all phenomena" relieved "the logical tension of the mind."[49] Faith has to be accepted, therefore, as the basis of the rise of religious phenomenon.

It is a wellknown fact that August Comte has stated that the theological stage passes through

> "three successive sub-stages fetishism, polytheism, and monotheism."

In other words the beginning of religion lies in fetishism which regards all objects in nature as animate and alive. Fetishism admitted of no priesthood, in as much as its gods are just individuals, each residing in fixed objects.[50]"Thus, the primitive man believed in all kinds of fetishes which were thought to be replete with spirits or supernatural beings.

If we try to think carefully, even this fetishism is the indicator of human faith. Unless we presume this element of faith as enshrined in man's heart, we cannot explain this phenomenon of fetishism.

Even the theory of Durkheim implicitly assumes the fact of human faith. He was of the view that rites and ceremonies, the ritualistic activities, are the elementary forms of religion. His theory has been summarized by Soro-kin in the following words."[51]

> "That the source of religion is the society itself;that religious coceptions are nothing but symbols of the characteristics of the society:that the sacred, or God, is but a personified society: and that the substantial social function of religion has consisted in the creation, reinforcement and maintenance of social solidarity."

The pertinent question that may be asked here is why does an individual try to perform a rite or social ceremony? The answer is that he is prompted to undertake such an act by his inner faith. In the absence of such a faith, a person is unlikely to perform any ceremony whatsoever.

A still another type of theory may be considered here. Hegel and James Frazer had advocated the theory that an age of magic preceded the age of religion. That implies that magic is the source of religion. It was believed by Hegel and Frazer[52], that in the primitive period, the primitive man used to think that he could control the processes of nature by the force of spells and incantantions. When this method failed to produce the required result, he appealed to supernatural powers, superior to human beings-spiritis, gods or deified ancestors, whose help was called forth by a priest. Thus, in course of time, the magician was replaced by the priest and



the dictatorial incantation was done away with in favour of the method of sacrifice and prayer.

Macdonell too shares this view.

> "Hence religion which is concerned with the mystically good," writes Macdonell, "has at first much in common with magic, which only in the long run is separated from religion, to become a synonym for all 'dealings with devil' i.e. for all use of mystically impressive means of effecting bad and anti-social ends."[53]

This theory of magic too is simply based on an element of sheer faith. Who can deny that magical incantations have no significance and value unless people have faith in them? Thus, even according to this theory of magic, the human faith is considered of basic importance and worth.

E.O. James has tried to summarize the views of the various scholars on the question of the origin of religion in following terms:

> "From this very brief survey of the archaeological and anthropological evidence bearing upon religious phenomena in the old Stone Age, it may reasonably be concluded that Early Man was deeply impressed by the mystery of death and birth, and by his dependence on a providential source of life and well-being, and of forces governing nature. Having little understanding of natural processes and laws beyond his own observations, he felt the need of establishing friendly relations with the living reality overruling the mysterious phenomena around him. This constituted his conception of a divine Providence greater than himself and controlling his destinies. Thus, was aroused in him a 'numinous' reaction to the inexplicable, unpredictable, aweinspiring element in his experience which found expression in a ritual technique for the purpose of establishing efficacious relations with the source of all bounty and beneficence, above and within the world, at once transcendent and immanent, as we might say in our idiom. It was

> not, however, only to enable these ill-provided denizens to secure the means of subsistence and to advance with hope and confidence on life's journey that supernatural aid was sought. Even lowly, Neanderthal Man, degenerate though he may have been and doomed to extinction as a type, had already begun to look forward to a life beyond the grave, a life like that which he had lived on earth no doubt, for he could conceive none other where he would still need the food and the tools he had always required. Moreover, if he was to live again in his body it must be restored to life with the aid of such vitalizing agents as ochre and shells. So eventually these too were buried with the corpse.
>
> It was in such ways as these, it would seem that religion began and although archaelogy can supply only the raw material, from these early beginnings have emerged the complex pattern of myth and ritual, of faith and practice, which constitutes the history of religion when Early Man passed from a food gathering to a food-producing state of culture."[54]

James has rightly stated that the historty of religion provides only a history of "faith and practice".

From these various data we come to the same conclusion that the element of faith is quite old. Perhaps, it is the oldest feature of human personality.

But it would be wrong to presume that the faith of humanity had been centred around one Supreme Being right from the dawn of human faith. Generally it has been believed that the nature worship has naturally given humanity innumerable gods. For example, in the Vedic period we find that many gods were worshipped. We come across three categories of gods. In the first category can be included gods of heavens like Dyauh, Varuna, Surya, Pusan, Visnu, Usha etc.

In the second category we come across gods like Indra, Marut, and Parjanya, i.e. the gods of the climate.



And in the third category we find gods like Soma, fire etc. who can be termed the gods of the earth. When the sacrifices became common, even the pots and instruments used in the sacrifice were considered gods. Sometimes even the emotions and sentiments like Sraddha etc. were personified and were worshipped like gods.

Though in many places of the Rigveda we find that the number of the gods worshipped was considered thirty-three, actually perhaps the number of the gods worshipped, was much bigger."[55] The number of gods was so big because of the individual faith asserting itself in different manner. Pandit Nehru had observed, in view of this very tendency of the ancient Indians.

> "If Niagara Falls were in India, they would be a god. They would be regarded as a manifestation of divinity."[56]

This tendency of deification of natural objects is not peculiar to India, but is found universally. For example, talking about the Shinto religion of Japan, one writer has suggested.

> "If you find a hydro-electric plant at the bottom of a hill, at the top will be a Shinto shrine, and not only that, but at the shrine you will find people worshipping."[57]

It would be wrong to suggest that this belief in a plurality of gods is only the feature of a by-gone period. Even now we find people who assert in a most earnest spirit that there must be a number of gods. For example, William James has faith in a plurality of such gods, because,

> "God", says James, "in the religious life of ordinary men, is the name not of the whole of things, heaven forbid, but only of the ideal tendency in things, believed in as a superhuman person who calls to cooperate in his purposes, and who furthers ours if they are worthy."[58]

Dr. Cabot in his book, "What Men Live By," has stated that the four things we live by are work and play and love and worship. Yes, every man is a worshipper of some god of his own choice.

And as people differ in their liking[59], for in the words of Charles Lamb, a man is "a bundle of likings and dislikings"[60] there is bound to be different types of gods.

This, however, does not mean that all people even in the distant past were of the opinion that the gods are different in character, for Andrew Lang has ably demonstrated in his book "The Making of Religion" that 'high gods' existed even in 'low races'. He has made a very categorical statement, the truth of which is also clear from a study of the hymns of the Rigveda that

> "There would be nothing strange in the matter if the crude idea of 'Universal Power' came earliest and was superseded, in part, by a later propitiation of the dead and ghosts."[61]

But, generally speaking, it would be better to think that in the earliest experience of the individual the gods appeared to be different. It appears that, popularly speaking, in the primitive period a number of gods flourished in the hearts of the individuals.

> "The various pagan religions reflected especially in the poems and histories of Greek and Roman antiquity were all polytheistic. The number of their gods, Montaigne estimates, amounts to six and thirty thousands."[62]

But as we have already suggested, it would be wrong to think that every individual out of the great mass of the primitives thought that every god is different. There must have been at least a few persons who must have felt that there could be only one God. The researches of Andrew Lang point out to this fact. Some of the hymns found in the Rigveda do not leave any doubt that there was a tendency of thinking all gods as merely the manifestations of a single Divinity. This is not the concept of Monotheism, because the multiplicity of gods is accepted at least to respect the sentiments of the various devotees. This tendency has been described as 'henotheism' by Max Muller.

> "If we must have a general name for the earliest form of religion among the Vedic Indians," writes Max Muller, "it can be neither monotheism nor polytheism, but only henotheism, that is, a belief and worship of those single objects, whether semi- tangible or intangible in which man first suspected the presence of the invisible and the infinite, each of which, as we saw, was raised into something more than finite, more than natural, more than conceivable; and thus grew in the end to be an Asura, or a living thing,; a Deva, or a bright being; an Amartya, that is not a mortal, and at last an immortal and eternal being, in fact a god, endowed with the highest qualities which the human intellect could conceive of at the various stages of its growth."[63]



There are sufficient evidences in the Rigveda to justify this henotheistic tendency. For example, let us take the panegyric addressed to Vishnu.

> "O Vishnu, thou dost hold this earth and heaven in many ways."[64] "I shall speak of the mighty works of Vishnu, who measured the worlds, who astonished the upper worlds, who walked three steps; people praise hims greatly."[65]

This henotheistic tendency leads ultimately not only to Monotheism, but much beyond that to Monism. Thus, we find that the seer of the Rigveda declares:

> "They call Him Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, and the heavenly noble-winged Garutman; sages call the ONE REALITY by many names, Agni, Yama, Matarisva."[66]

This idea is repeated on occasions that occur subsequently[67]. The Vedic thinkers realized in a moment of an enlightened flight that:

> "They (the earth and the heaven) are not all; there is another above them. He is the lord of food. When the horses of the sun did not begin to carry the sun, He created his sacred skin (implying thereby that before the sun was created, He existed)."[68]

And finally the convinced seers declared the supreme truth of philosophy.

"The priests and poets with words make into many the hidden reality which is but one."[69]

This is monism, the philosophical concept that is the culmination of rational speculation and the ideal peached passionately by the Advaita. The height of this monistic thought was reached in the Nasadiya Sukta[70]"and the Purusa Sukta."[71] "In India they reached monism, though not monotheism" "writes Deussen," on a more philosophical path (than Egypt and Palestine), seeing through the veil of manifold the unity which underlies it."[72]

And Max Muller hailed it with the statement :

"In fact the Vedic poets had arrived at a conception of the godhead which was reached once more by some of the Christian philosophers at Alexandria, but which even at present is beyond the reach of many who call themselves Christians."[73]

No doubt with this background the Vedic seer realized even at the dawn of human civilization that the world is 'one nest'[74].

We have discussed about this March of the Vedic seers from the multiplicity of gods to the one non-dual Supreme, not only because we are discussing the concept of bhakti of India, but also because of the fact that the process found working at the time of Vedas, is typical of all the processes of thought found sooner or later, through out the world. This is a fact that has been accepted by scholars like Max Muller, Macdonell, and Radhakrishnan."[75]

This account proves that human faith has been alive from the very dawn of human life. This very faith, first of all, created a number of gods, and subsequently influenced by, and guided by the inspried guidance of rationality, pinned itself on one signle Supreme. But had there been no faith, there would not have been any religion, and any philosophy. Philosophy can only reflect on the data furnished by religion, which is, in fact, a concretion of faith.

It would be, therefore, just proper and desirable to hold that bhakti is as old as humanity. At least in India the concept of bhakti or devotion must be considered as old as India



herself. Hence, we need not dwell on this point here. But before we actually discuss the growth of bhakti in India, let us try to understand the concept of bhakti itslef. Let us first clear our vision regarding devotion, before we try to discuss its rise in India.

**MEANING OF BHAKTI:**

To start with, let us study the derivation of the term 'bhakti' itself, because the root and original meaning of term can be grasped only in the manner. The term 'bhakti' comes from the root "bhaj" meaning "to serve". This very "bhaj" becomes what we term as "bhakti" by the application of a grammatical rule.[76] Thus, the root meaning of 'bhakti' means 'serving'. Etymologically one can serve anything from God to riches or anything else worldly in nature. But usually in colloquial language "bhakti" implies only the service of God. And this is the proper meaning of the term. For example, Tulasidasa, a foremost poet of Hindi and a profound scholar of Sanskrit uses the word 'bhakti' in this very sense when he writes:

"kavaniu siddhi ki binu bisavasa
binu hari bhajana na bhava bhaya nasa."

The Bhagavata, similarly, uses the word in the sense of 'service of God, when it writes:

"matsevaya pratitam ca salokyadicatustayam"[77] or
"naikatmatam me sprhayanti keci[78]
nmatpadasevabhirata madih"

But one can serve any deity only when one has faith in one's heart.[79] This faith can prompt a person to serve a deity only when, the faith is turned into or matures in the form of an intense love for the latter.

Thus, etymologically understood, bhakti implies a sincere service of a god prompted by an intense love based on a sense of supreme faith. Unless a person is full of faith and love, and unless this love of the heart oozes out in the form of service of the deity, he cannot be said to be a bhakt or devotee. We can, therefore, define bhakti as a hearty service

of the Supreme inspried by a profound love and unflinching faith.

Our interpretation of the term 'bhakti' resembles the meanings of the word 'bhakti' as understood and interpreted by some notable authorities on 'bhakti'.

Thus, according to the Narada Bhakti Sutra

> "The profound and immortal love for the Lord is called bhakti."[80]

According to the Sandilya Bhakti Sutra,

> "An intense love for God is known as bhakti."[81]

For Madhusudana Sarasvati, bhakti is the mental tenency directed towards God, excited by the hearing of God's attributes.[82] Rupa Goswami in his 'Bhakti Rasamrta sindhu' has defined bhakti as being imbued with the love of the deity completely.[83] The Narada Pancaratra defines bhakti as serving God with pure mind after banishing all worldly and other desires.[84] But the real nature of bhakti cannot be perhaps fully revealed by these forthright desriptions and definations of bhakti. I feel that the real nature of bhakti can be grasped by the study of the prayer addressed by Tulsidas.

> "O Rama, please be so dear to me as a passionate man loves a woman, and as a greedy man loves his riches."[85]

Bhakti thus connotes a mental stage where all the mundane objects lose their attraction, and a steady and intense love for the Supreme is expereinced-the object of that love being God's love itself. No ulterior object remains before a person who is devoted to God. And as this devotion is founded on an unflinching faith, the devotee never questions the power of this deity. Of course, there can be gradations in devotion. There can a devotee who is not able to reach the highest rung of the ladder. He may pray his Lord just to get material prosperity. But once he continues his march onward, he is likely to reach to the highest point sooner or later. For devotion implies an attitude which values the service of the deity as the supreme passion of the devotee. Once the process starts, the possibility is that it would not



stop till it has attained its cherished objective. As a 'matter of fact, it would be wrong to term any tendency that is submerged in the attachment for mundane objects, as devotion; for there cannot be any compromise on the fundamental issues; and valuing worldly objects implies that the love for the deity is still not fully matured. The examples from the world of devotion make this fact quite clear. Prahlada, Tulsidas, Suradas, Ramakrishna, Gandhi-the list is almost endless. As one devotee has stated.

> "The lane of love is too narrow. There is no place for two there."[86]

In fact Tulsidas asked Mira to leave anyone who is against God.[87]

### GOD: SAGUNA, NIRGUNA

As we have seen, bhakti, or devotion implies faith in the god head. To start with, every human being needs some concrete symbol to concentrate his attention thereon. It is not possible to fix one's mind on an abstract entity from the very beginning. A child who is taught the lesson in language has to begin from the alphabets and words. As he grows up and his intelligence ripens in a desirable degree, he realizes that the words are merely symbols. They are not the things. A child who took the world 'flower' for the actual flower in the beginning, realizes after the completion of his real stuides and fruition of his knowledge that the world 'flower' is merely a symbol of the real flower.

It is a secret of human psychology that we proceed from the gross to the abstract. The unknown has to be interpreted in terms of the known. That is the way in which human knowledge proceeds. Even the illustrious logicians like Cohen and Nagel have accepted this fact when they write:

> "In trying to visualize the unknown, the imagination must clothe it with attributes analogus to the known."[88]

Even the great Sankara has declared that though the Brahman is nirguna' (devoid of any attributes), yet He becomes 'saguna' for the sake of 'upasana' (propitiation).[89]

There cannot be any doubt that the Supreme Reality cannot be 'saguna' in its ultimate form, for that would make It delimited, and on this point there is no confusion in Indian mind. As a matter of fact the Tripadvibhutimahanarayana Upanisad asks the question, "Is Brahman formless or has it any form?" and declares.

> "on the grounds of Veda, logical inference, and actual experience, that what has form consists of parts and is necessarily perishable;while what is formless has no parts and is imperishable."[90]

The Supreme is, therefore, really speaking formless, Infinite, and Imperishable etc. But this supreme truth about the Ultimate Reality has to be grasped gradually and systematically. Therefore, to help men realize the Reality which is otherwise inaccessible even to mind and language, a psychologically tenable device of devotion has been invented.

In the Siva-gita, Rama puts a query to Shankara:

> "Lord if you are so inaccessible to human agencies like language and thought even because of your instrinsic unthinkable nature, how can any body try to know you at all?"

The answer given by Lord Sankara is very revealing.

> "O mighty Rama, hearken the device. First gain concentration of mind through a devotion of the Saguna God, and then by the principle of Sthula-Saurambhika wherein a person who is feeling thirsty but is unable to go to a receptacle of water, is driven onwards by mirage till he comes to the receptacle of water itself and satisfies his thirst, he is enabled to realize my formless nature."[91]

Even the greatest of the men of knowledge has to begin his march towards the realization of the supreme knowledge only in this manner. We should not be surprised, therefore, when we come across the statement of Rudolph Otto:that Sankara and Eckhart both are not only philosophers, but are theologicians too.[92]

What is important to note is that even Otto does not think



that the 'saguna' is quite incompatible with the 'nirguna'. On the other hand he declares:

> "Samkara's nirgunatvam is the superlative of sagunatvam. The former does not deny the latter, but the latter is taken up into the former."[93]

When the Bhagavata declares that Krishna is God Himself[94] and one, single Lord is considered in different names and ways,[95] the Bhagavata clearly demonstrates that it has not lost sight of the basic fact of philosophy. In fact the Bhagavata has stated in the very first verse, that the Supreme Truth is the object of its meditation.[96]

The secret behind the device of devotion is rightly explained Dr.N.K.Brahma when he writes:

> "The Bhakti-marga points out that it is wrong psychology to try to drive out things from the mind and to make it a vaccum before filling it up with other things.'[97]

A devotee who feels that his God is quite close to him, in fact

> "Closer is he than breathing,
> And nearer than hands or feet."[98]

is sure to get the ultimate truth that the real nature of God is formlessness. Let us not forget the limitation of human psychology. Even a brilliant philosopher like Kant was unable to understand the nature of the Ultimate Reality through the process of intellectual activity. His monumental work, Critique of Pure Reason, is simply the essay of human intelligence failing in reaching the ultimate objective. But what Kant could not get through his sheer intellectual effort, he could get through faith. His Critique of Practical Reason is merely a version of his faith that wanted to come out and declare to the world that God does exist. Radhakrishnan strikes the right note when he declares:

> Human intellect is quite incapable of making reliable statements of a sphere which is beyond its scope. But the human heart is quite capable of responding to the Spirit."[99]

When we start any work whatsoever we need a sense of deep faith in our objective as the first condition of our success. If this element of faith is so important for attaining success in the world of mundane objects, it must be thousand times more important for a man who sets out in search of the Supreme. If he starts only with the help of a torch of knowledge, it is just possible that the cells of the batteries may become exhausted and the person may be lost in the thickness of the dark. But if he starts his journey with the unfailing motor car of faith, the more he advances the more shall be the light of the car-lamps, and he would be able to complete his journey quite safely and steadily even in the abysmal darkness.

Rousseau was such a traveller of the path of faith. That is why he could declare very emphatically:

> "All the subtleties of metaphysics will not make me doubt for a moment in the immortality of the soul and a beneficient providence. I feel it, I believe it, I wish it, I hope it. I will defend it to my last breath."[100]

A man of faith talks from the bottom of his heart and shifts discussion of God from, what Rousseau called, the terrain of "enlightened reason."[101]

The man of knowledge may deny God, because he wants to know him through his steretyped means. He invents reasons to prove the existence of God, and then pulls them down. This is the story of the criticisms of the proofs of God all of which were demolished by Kant. And even if a man is sometimes satisfied with the arguments he puts forth to prove the existence of God, he is simply unable to feel that ecstasy which is the common privilege of a man of faith and devotion. Cardinal Newman had said during the course of his Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregation about such people:

> "After all, you do not know, you only conclude that there is a God. You see Him not, you but hear of Him."

But only 'concluding' that there is a God is not enough. What is needed is God-intoxication for the transformation of individual life. Only a man of faith like Goethe can feelingly assert:



> "The All-Embracer, the All-Sustainer, doesn't He embrace and sustain you and me and Himself?...Fill your heart to the very brim with all this, and when that feeling makes your bliss complete, then name it as you will, call it Happiness, Heart, Love, God. It have no name for it. Feeling is everything:a name is sound and smoke, befogging heavely fire."[102]

Yes, for a man of faith God is Happiness, Love. Heart.

Here faith can lift a man, and reason can send him down. The reason is obvious in the couplets of John Dryden:

> "Let reason then at her own quarry fly,
> But how can finite grasp infinity?"

Knowledge is the path, hazardous and perilous, trodden by the intellectual aristocrat and adventurers. But the path of devotion is that asphalt road through which any man can, not only walk, but even run, to get his objective.

The Bhagavata, that is why has, given due importance to devotion in the direction of realizing the Supreme. But at the same time it has taken care to distinguish between two kinds of bhakti, which have been called The Saguna Bhakti and the Nirguna Bhakti respectively by the Bhagavata.[103] The Saguna Bhakti should ultimately mature into the Nirguna Bhakti. The Bhagavata has supreme faith in the qualityless, formless Supreme.[104] In the last analysis the Saguna should be submerged in the Nirguna as the rain-bow is lost in the sky.

Those who are likely to criticize the Saguna aspect of God, because they are the worshippers of the Nirguna, should also not forget that to believe in the Saguna God is not illusory. The Vedantist is likely to think that the whole world is false just as mistaking a piece of rope as a snake is false. To worship the Saguna is perhaps considred erroneous by the Vedantist, when he approaches the worship from his set point of view.

But this view-point is totally wrong. The Saguna worhsip is like conceiving the ornaments in gold. From this step the Saguna worshippr can easily rise to the position that ultimately the gold is real, and the form of an ornament unim-

portant. What is important to note is that even at the very elementary stage of devotion, this idea is clear before the devotee that he worships God. Upon close reflection, he would certainly come to consider the Supreme as the formless. But even if he does not rise to that stage, no harm shall be done, for he is not worshipping a stone or a statue but the God.

In this connection the attention to the following statement of the Kularnava Tantra may be drawn:

> "Just as the milk residing in the limbs of a cow comes out from the nipples of the cow, in the same way the all- pervading God appears through statues. It becomes possible because of the unwavering faith, sincere meditation, and liking of the meditator."[105]

Human impulses are very strong. They can be neither chained nor destroyed. The path of knowledge tries to do this alone. But the path of bhakti uses, psychologically more solid and magnificent device, of turning them in desirable direction and sublimating them to the highest possible extent.

The Supreme is depicted as the most beautiful being in the world,[106] the attractor of the god of beauty himself[107], utmost friendly to all,[108] the supporter of the good.[109], very kind,[110] giver of all wishes and desires,[111] very auspicious,[112], etc. When God is depicted so full of appreciable qualities, who shall not like to love him? And an inspired heart like that of the poet Rasakhana may sing:

> "I shall sacrifice the kingdom of the three worlds on this staff and the cloth of Sri Krsna."[113]

Faith has supreme power. It can transform individual life completely. Such a transformation is difficult to achieve through the path of knowledge alone.

The Supreme philosophical ideal is to lead a non-attached life which at the same time should be full of enjoyment.[114] Even a man of knowledge aims at achieving such an atttitude towards life. But a man of knowledge cannot do so in most of the cases. He thinks of leaving the world and indulges into meditation in a cave of some mountain. This



attitude towards life is totally negative. It can not bring any prosperity and happiness in this world. A man of knowledge is, therefore, the breaker of the world, because, if the ideal of renunciation is accepted as the summum bonum of human life, how can we save the world? It is this type of approach towards life that has been criticized by persons like Marx and the world.

A man of devotion, on the other hand, leads a life of dedication and service spontaneously. He brings about a fragrance of sacrifice and hearty co-operation in the world. The world has been able to record progress because of the persons like Socrates, Christ, Gandhi, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda etc. These people did not flee away from the world. They on the other hand, moulded the world and sowed the seeds of human progress and prosperity.

## BHAKTI: A SOURCE OF INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL PROGRESS

It is clear, therefore, that Bhakti is a source of Individual and Social progress and attainments.

Bhakti tries to wean the attachment of an individual from the mundane objects in a very psychologically appreciable manner. Instead of an attachment for a woman, bhakti gives an attachment for Rama or a Krisna, or a Siva. We need not destroy the currents of our hearty affection. What is needed is simply a diversion of direction. Then the entire attitude towards life becomes changed. Then the strength does not make us unruly, and power does not make us mad. Then one can cross the frontiers of narrowness of every kind, and every description. Vibhisana, the brother of the mighty, but unscrupulous king of Lanka, braved the anger of his brother but did not hesitate in condemning the wrong act of his brother in bringing away Sita forcibly. What sacrifice did he not make to serve the cause of justice and morality? He could do so because he was a devotee of God.

Many times individual lives are ruined because one loses all hope and confidence. Human life is a pathetic story of knotty problems, and baffling worries. Abnormal Psychology

throws ample light on how emotional instability, personality disorganization and character defects have made at least ten per cent of the general population, wretched and wasted.[115] And specially in old age when the lights of the world fail, the life of an individual becomes agony incarnate as is well described by Shakespeare:

"Last scene of all
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

It has been estimated that some ten thousand persons commit suicides every year in America. Dr. A.H. Maslow and Dr. Bela Mittelmann, have given the stastistical data in their book Principles of Abnormal Psychology, which reveal how the number of the patients is increasing every year even in America where people are on the whole very rich and educated.[116]

How far this mental deterioration is taking place can be understood to some extent by Fisher's very modest and some twenty year old account- I have added the words 'twenty years' because now the things have become all the more bleak. Let me quote the very words of Fisher:

> "Furthermore, the student of abnormal psychology should realize that although the phenomena which he will study often may seen strange, perhaps bizarre, they are none the less remote from no person's life. With 420,000 persons in mental hospitals in the United States, with the incidence of insanity directly affecting 4 percent of the population, and with an estimated ten per cent of the population definitely neurotic, to say nothing of the emotionally unstable, the criminal class, hoboes, and prostitutes, no one may hope to escape coming directly or indirectly into contact with problems of mental abnormality. And likewise the student should be cognizant of the fact that the neurotically biased and the emotionally unstable all too often are the last to admit of personality disorders in themselves, and that in proportion to their numbers perhaps no group



> of person has so much to do with the initiation and direction of movements in society as they."[117]

With the increase of education, the complexities of human life have also increased. Man's sensitive mind has become susceptible to good many worries, financial, emotional, political, in nature.

He can therefore, very easily develop psychoneuroses and psychoses.

The secret of mental hygine is making the mind strong so that it would not fall a prey to any storm and stress. Actually "the prevention of mental disorders" is possible by "healthy psychological living."[118] The Brhad Naradiya Purana has put the secret of "healthy psychological living" in a nut-shell form when it declares that the mind alone is the cause of the bondage and liberation of men.[119]

A man of devotion is able to bear all the storms of life with a smiling face. He is confident that he would be helped by his Lord and all the problems and difficulties shall be duly solved.[120] Therefore, a devotee, like Angada, can challenge even the mightiest of man, if an occasion demands such a conduct on his part.

The faith of a devotee works like a powerful autosuggestion and can help him in any hour of trial and tribulation. Emile Coue has already demonstrated the wonderful effect of this self- confidence. In fact he was able to cure many patients with the help of his method. The watch word of Coue's method was

> "Our actions spring not from our Will, but from our Imagination."

and when one imagines that the omnipotent, omniscient, kind- hearted God is one's protector, how can one be despondent? He himself had recommended the aid of religion.

> "Religious minds who wish to associate the formula with God's care and protection might do so after this fashion. 'Day by day, in every way, by the help of God, I 'm getting better and better.' It is possible that the attention of Unconscious will thus be turned to moral

> and spiritual improvements to a greater extent than by the ordinary formula."[121]

Dale Carnegie has quoted many statements of the persons who could find new hope and light in their lives due to faith in God. For example, he has quoted the story of E. Stanley Jones under the head," I Heard a Voice in India". Stanley Jones has stated in that narration of his personal experience:

> "This one thing I know:my life was completely transformed and uplifted that night in Lucknow, thirty-one years ago, when at the depth of my weakness and depression, a voice said to me: 'If you will turn that over to Me and not worry about it, I will take care of it, 'and I replied, 'Lord, I close the bargain right here."[122]

The value of the religious faith has been accepted even by an astute logician and thinker like Bertrand Russell. He has specifically written in his book 'Religion And Science.

> "I cannot admit any method of arriving at truth except that of science;but in the realm of the emotion I do not deny the value of the experiences which have given rise to religion.[123]

We find, thus, that faith in God can help a man lead a sensible and happy life in this world.

In social life, too, a man of devotion contributes richly in the direction of achievement of social progress and human prosperity. He is a self-effacing, self-sacrificing entity. He preaches the gospel of universal love, and respects everybody.[124] He takes the act of dividing humanity on any line, as the creation by 'animal intelligence'.[125] For him the whole world is one indivisible whole. Unlike a man of knowledge, who can renounce the world to seek his liberation, a man of bhakti is a person who does not want any liberation leaving his other worldly brothers behind.[126]

We find, therefore, that a man of devotion leads a life of supreme dedication. Even if for a moment we presume that there is no God, or the path of devotion cannot lead to the Supreme Truth, bhakti becomes very desirable because of



its highly, social value. Who can deny that Tulsidas inspired new faith and confidence in society through his various works,[127] Gandhi had the courage of fighting a unique battle of nonviolence against the biggest and the mightiest empire of the world. The true devotees are invariably the ideal social beings.

But bhakti is not desirable only from these points of view. It is also desirable even from the point of view of realizing the Supreme. The path of knowledge is slippery, and the path of action shallow and narrow. The path of devotion combines the good qualities of both these paths even according to Sri Yamunacarya and Sri Ramanuja.[128] If the path of devotion is the simplest path why should not one adopt it? Any condemnation of the path of devotion is totally unjustified because ultimately all the paths meet in the realization of the Supreme.[129]

> Radhakrishnan has rightly pointed out that "the three (paths) are not exclusive, but emphasize the dominant aspects. "and" in the highest flights, bhakti coincides with jnana, and both these issue in right karma or virtuous life."[130]

In view of the exceptional merits of the path of bhakti, the Bhagavata has rightly declared that even the jnana and karma attain beauty only when bhakti is associated therewith.[131] Whosoever has tasted this ambrosia, he cannot like anything else.[132] The rise of bhakti is thus a most valuable and lovable phenomenon in the domain of not only realization of the Supreme, but even in the realm of achievements in the individual and social lives.

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janami adharmam na ca me nivrttih.
16. 12-5.
17. Katha 1-3-14
18. nirguna kaon desa ko basi
ko hai janaka, janani ko kahiyata, kaun nari, ko dasi
kaiso barana, bhesa hai kaiso, kehi rasa me abhilasi.
nirguna kauna desa ko basi ?
madhukara hasi samujhaya;sauha de bujhati sanca, na hansi.
rupa rekha binu mana niralamba kita dhavai
rekha na rupa, barana jake nahi tako hamai batavata
apani kahau, darasa aise ko tuma kakahun hau pavata?
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20. tulsi alakhahi ka lakhe, rama nama japu nica.
21. *Indian Philosophy*, Vol II, 1956, p. 659.
22. Surendranath Dasgupta:*Religion And Rational Outlook*, p. 262.
23. *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 659.
24. *Ibid*, p. 661.
25. Bhakti Yoga, p. 18.
26. nayamatma pravacanena labhyo
na medhaya na bahuna srutena-1-2-23.
27. mumuksurvai saranamaham prapadye:Sve. 6-18.
28. *Yoga Sutra* 1-23
29. S.R. Radhakrishnan:*East and West*, p. 23.
30. B.G.11-54.
31. *Bhakti Yoga*, p. 4.
32. Dr. N.K. Brahma:*Philosophy of Hindu Sadhana*:p.75.
33. *Psychology*, p. 218.



34. *The New Leviathan*, pp. 174-175.
Similarly Boring, Langfeld and Weld write in their *"Foundations of Psychology"*:
"Vestiges of these instinctive activities may often be seen in man's behaviour, but learning, habit, intelligence and culture have so overridden them that it is seldom proper to speak of instinctive behaviour in man",p. 46.
35. *Aspirations From a Fresh World*, p. 28.
36. *Types of Philosophy*, p. 24.
37. *The Philosophy of Religion*, by D.Miall Edwards, p. 152-153.
38. *The New Leviathan*, p. 56.
39. *Ibid*, p. 57.
Dr. C.G. Jung too has observed: "Freud has, unfortunately, overlooked the fact that man has never yet been able singlehanded to hold his own against the powers of darkness. Man has always stood in need of the spiritual help which each individual's own religion held out to him. It is this that lifts him out of his distress. "-Modern Man in Search of a Soul, p. 277-8.
40. Lewis Browne, *This Believing World*, p. 27.
41. Emil durkheim: *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, p. 229.
42. *Ibid*, p. 47.
43. Samuel Koenig, *Man And Society*, p. 113.
44. *Ibid*.
45. *Ibid*, p. 112.
46. Lectures On the Origin And Growth of Religion, p. 39.
47. Gerald L. Berry, *Religions of the World*, p. 1.
48. *Religion And Rational Outlook*, p. 43-44.
49. *Ibid*, p. 45.
50. Auguste Comte, *Positive Philosophy*, translated by Martinue III:13.
51. Pitirim Sorokin, *Contemporary Sociological Theories*, p. 474.
52. E.O. James, *History of Religions*, p. 5.
53. *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol.13, p. 229.
54. *History of Religions*, pp. 29-30.
55. R.V. I-34-11: *"Ye Devas are thirty-three in number."* R.V. IX-92-4 : *"O nasatya Aswins, come here with the thirty three gods to drink the sweet (Soma)"*.
56. Louis Fischer : *The Great Challenge*, 1947, p. 114.
57. E.S. Bogardus, *The Development of Social Thought*, p. 81.
58. William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p. 81.
59. rucinam vaicitryad-Siva Mahimna Strotra.
60. "Imperfect Sympatheies".

61. *The Making of Religion*, p. 186.
62. The Great Ideas, Vol. I, p. 544.
63. Lectures On the Origin And Growth of Religion, p. 266.
64. *R.V. VIII-99-3*
65. *R.V. I-154-1*
66. *R.V. I-164-46*
67. *R.V. I-64-64;X-114-5*
68. *R.V. X-31-8*
69. *R.V. X-114-46*
70. *R.V. X-129*
71. *R.V. X-90*
72. *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, p. 13.
73. *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 51-52.
74. *Yajurveda*, 32-8.
75. Max Muller: "We see in the Veda the theogony itself, the very birth and growth of the gods." (Lectures On the Origin And Growth of Religion, p. 203)

    Radhakrishnan: "The process of god making in the factory of Man's mind cannot be seen so clearly anywhere else as in the Rgveda." (*Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 73)

    A.A. Macdonel: "This Vedic religion is pecularly important as a branch of study. It is not only the earliest body of religious beliefs preserved in the literary guise, but also presents a more primitive phase of thought than is recorded in other literature....No other religion, therefore, furnishes such invaluable material for the study of the historical evolution of religious thought." (Lectures on Comparative Religion, p. 58)
76. 'bhaj sevayam'. By an application of Panini's grammatical rule (*Panini Sutra* 3-3-94, '*striyam ktin*', the term 'bhakti' is derived. Other derivations of the term 'bhakti' are 'bhajanam bhaktih', 'bhajyate anaya iti bhaktih', 'bhajanti anaya iti bhaktih'.
77. *Bha. 9-4-67*
78. *Bha. 3-25-34*
79. sraddhavan bhajate.
80. Sutra 2
81. 1-1-2
82. Bhakti Rasayana, 1-3
83. iste swarasiki ragah paramavistata bhavet
84. sarvopadhivinirmuktam taparatvena nirmalam hrsikena hrsikesa sevanam bhaktirucyate.
85. Kamihi nari piari jimi
    lobhihi priya jimi dama



    timi raghunatha nirantara priya
    lagahu mohi rama.

    In the Visnu Purana Prahlada prays for a similar attitude:

    "Just as persons lacking the sense of discrimiantion are firmly attached to the sensual objects, in the same way, may I develop an unwavering faith and love for you." (1-20-20)
86. prema gali ati sankari, tame do na samaya.
87. jake priya na rama-vaidehi
    tajiye tinhe koti bairi sama, jadyapi parama sanehi.
88. Morris R. Cohen & Ernest Nagel: An *Introduction to Logic And Scientific Method*, p. 374.
89. Samkara commenting on the Sutra 1-2-14 of the Brahma Sutra writes: "nirgunamapi sad brahma namarupagatagunaih, sagunamupasanartha tatra tatropadisyate.

    Again he writes in his commentary on the Sutra 3-2-13 "savisesatvamapi brahmano abhyupagantavyam."

    In the course of his commentary on the Sutra 3-2-15, he writes:

    "akaravisesopadesa upasanarthe na viruddhyate."
90. K.V. Gajendragadkar: *Neo-Upanisadic Philosophy*, p. 79.
91. Padma Purana, Siva Gita, 14-5

    Swami Yatiswaranada writes in his Adventures in Vedanta:

    "The universal form of the Lord was overwhelming to the devotee (Arjuna). He longed for a humanized form with which he could establish a loving human relationship, regarding the Lord as father, mother, friend, or beloved. Krishna manifested himself as teacher. This is what every devotee seeks at first. But as he becomes established in divine love, the Lord, the Supreme Guru, reveals to him, in due course, His manifold forms. His universal form, and also His transcendant aspect beyond all name and form." (P. 121)

    Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa made the following observations to illustrate the Saguna and the Nirguna aspects of the Godhead:

    "Think of Brahman-Absolute Existence, Knowledge, Bliss, as a shoreless ocean. Through the cooling influence of the devotee's love, the water has frozen at places into blocks of ice. In other words, God now and then assumes various forms for his lovers and reveals Himself to them as a person. But with the rising of the sun of knowledge, the blocks of ice melt. Then one does not feel any more that God is a person, nor does one see God's forms. What He is cannot be described. Who will describe Him? He who would do so disappears. He cannot find his 'I' anymore." (The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, p. 78)

    On another occasion Sri Ramkrishna gave the illustration of Fire to prove the point. Fire itself is devoid of any shape, but glowing embers it assumes different shapes.
92. Rudolph Oto: *Mysticism East & West*, p. 16.

93. *Ibid*, p. 110.
94. Bha. 1-3-28.
95. 1-2-11
96. Bha. 1-1-1
97. *Philosophy of Hindu Sadhana*, p. 64
98. Tennyson, The Higher Pantheism.
99. *East & West*, p. 23.
100. Rousseau's Letter to Voltaire, August 18, 1756.
101. James Collins, *God in Modern Philosophy*, p. 156
102. J.W. Von Goethe, Foust, Part I, trans. B.O.Morgan, p.86
103. 3-29
104. 2-1-9
105. gavam sarvanga-ksiram sravetstanamukhat yatha
tatha sarvagato devah pratimadisu rajate.
abhirupyacca bimbasya pujayasca visesatah
sadhakasya ca visvasaddevetasannidhirbhavet.
Kularnava Tantra, 307

Let us not forget that either geometric or anthromorphic symbols are necessary for a beginner. The term symbol come from the Latin symbolus or symbolum meaning a sign by which one knows or infers a thing. The Saguna is therefore symbolic.
Swami Yatiswarananda has made a pertinent remark on the point that may be quoted here:

"Again and again, the contemporary man asks: 'Why do we need images?' The answer is that we need them simply because many of us are idolatrous to a great degree. We are too fond of idols of flesh and blood. We follow the cult of body-worship and are too fond of our own bodies and the bodies of those we love, forgetting the spirit within. We are too fond of our images and pictures. Many of us are really persons of poor understanding and need the use of physical symbols and holy personalities at the beginning of our spiritual lives." (Adventures in Vedant p.124)

The story is prevalent that Swami Vivekananda once went to the state of Alwar. The young Maharaja said to the Swamiji: 'I have no faith in idol worship." Swamiji there upon asked the Dewan and the courtiers present on the occasion to spit on the picture of the Maharaja. But the Dewan and the courtiers were shocked and said to the Swamiji : 'Oh, what are you asking us to do? Don't you know that this is the picture of our Maharaja?' The Swami smiled, and turning towards the Maharaja, said: 'Here is the answer of your question. The picture is a shadow of your highness which brings you to their minds, and they naturally look upon it with respect. In the same way, an image in the temple brings to the mind of the devotees their chosen aspect of the Deity. Devotees worship God with the help of an image. They do not worship the wood, the earth, or the metal of which the image



is composed. They worship the spirit symbolized by the image. The idol is merely a peg on which we hang our faith.' The Maharaja understood the point and said with a feeling of satisfaction: 'You have opened my eyes.' (*The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, p. 211)

106. bhuvana-sundara-Bha. 10-52-37
107. saksanmanmathamanmathah-Bha. 10-32-2
108. atibandhu-Bha. 10-29-4
109. saradah satam-Bha. 10-37-31
110. mahakarunika-Bha. 10-28-14
111. kalpataru-Bha. 1-38-22
112. parama mangala-Bha. 6-9-33
113. "ya lakuti aru kamaria para raja tihu pura ko taji darau" Rasakhana has very sincerely written still further: brahma mai dhundhyo purana-ganana, vedarica suni caugune cayana; dekhyo sunyo kabahun na kahun, vaha kaise sarupa au kaise subhayana;
terata herata hari paryo, rasakhana batayo na loga lugayana;
dekhyo duro vaha kunja-kutira me, baithoy palotata radhika payana;
i.e. I searche Brahman in the Puranas, studied the hymns of the Vedas with concentration; but no where I could know anything about its form and nature. I was tired of searching It, but nobody showed it to me. But lo, I saw him playing with the feet of Radha in a cottage of a garden, in a hidden manner.
Nandadasa, a Hindi poet and a believer in the Saguna form of the Godhead, has argued in his Bhramara Gita to the effect that if the Godhead is devoid of every attribute, from where there the attributes have come into being? Is it possible that there can be a tree without a seed?
'jau unake guna nahi aura guna bhaye kanha te?
bija bina taru jamai mohi tuma kahau kahan te?'
114. tena tyaktena bhunjitha-Isa. Upanisad, 1
raso vai sah - taittiriya Upanisad,7th anuvak:
'He knew that Brahman is bliss. For truly, beings here are born from bliss, when born they live by bliss, and into bliss, when departing, they enter.
115. Appeal, J.W: *Incidence of neuropsychiatric disorders in the Untied States Army in World War II*, Amer. J. Psychiet., 1946, p. 102.
116. *Principles of Abnormal Psychology*, p. 598
117. V.E. Fisher: *An Introduction to Abnormal Psychology*, p. 2
118. J.M. Fuster: *Psychological Counselling in India*, p. 214
119. mana eva manusyanam karanam bandhamoksyoh- Brhannaradiya Purana, 1-47-4
120. maccittah sarva durgani matprasadattarisyai- B.G., 18-58
121. C. Harry Brooks, *Better And Better Every Day: Two Classic texts on the healing power of the Mind.*, 131

122. Dale Carnegie, *How To Stop Worrying And Start Living*, p. 285
123. Thornton Butterworth, *Religion And Science*, p. 189
124. siya rama maya saba jaga jani
karahu pranama jori juga pani - Tulasidasa
(I salute with folded hands to every body, as the world is pervaded by Rama and Sita.)
parahita sarisa dharma nahi bhai - Tulasidasa
(There is no religion superior to rendering good to others.)
125. *Bha. 7-5-12*
126. *Bha. 7-9-44*
127. Ramachandra Shukla, *Hindi Sahitya Ka Itihasa*, p. 155
128. S.S. Raghavachar, *Vedarthasamgraha of Sri Ramanujacarya*, p. vii
129. "Although the first steps in the various paths differ considerably from one another, still the ways unite in the goal." *Philosophy of Hindu Sadhana*, p. 231
130. S.R. Radhakrishnan, *Hindu View of Life*, pp. 58-59
131. *Bha. 1-5-12:B. G. 9-54*
132. *Bha. 12-13-15*

# 6

# Religious Consciousness and Bhakti

Religious consciousness is a living and unmistakable experience. Of course, everybody cannot have it, because just as scientific consciousness or literary consciousness cannot be acquired by every person and is experiencable only by people of a particular temperament, in the same way, religious consciousness can be experienced only by those persons who have a particular tendency and potentiality.Only those persons who have freed their mind from a sense of ego and have developted an intense and exclusive love for God can experience it. For example, 'Sri Ramakrishna gives the following account of his experience:

> "After performing the worship of the Divine Mother, I used to meditate according to the Brahmani's directions. As soon as I began to tell my beads, I would be overwhelmed with ecstatic fervour and enter into samadhi. I cannot describe the wonderful spiritual visions I used to have. They followed one another in quick succession."[1]

The following prayer of Sri Caitanya gives us an idea about the nature of the religious experience:

> "Chant the name of the Lord and His glory unceasingly
> That the mirror of the heart may be wiped clean

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> "Chant the name of the Lord and His glory unceasingly
> That the mirror of the heart may be wiped clean

And quenched that mighty forest fire,
Wordly lust, raging furiously within.
Oh Name, stream down to moonlight on the lotus-heart,
Opening its cup to knowledge of Thyself.
Oh self, drown deep in the waves of His bliss,
Chanting His name continually,
Tasting His nectar at every step,
Bathing in His Name, that bath for weary souls.
Various are Thy Names, Oh Lord,
In each and every Name Thy power resides.
No times are set, no rites are needful, for chanting of Thy Name.

So vast is Thy mercy.

How huge, then, is my wretchedness
Who find, in this empty life and heart,
No devotion to Thy Name.
Oh, my mind,
Be humbler than a blade of grass,
Be patient and forebearing like the tree,
Take no honour to thy self,
Give honour to all,
Chant unceasingly the Name of the Lord.
Oh Lord and Soul of the Universe,
Mine is no prayer for wealth or retinue,
The play things of lust or the toys of fame;
As many times as I may be reborn
Grant me, Oh Lord, a steadfast love for Thee.
A drowning man in this world's fearful ocean
Is Thy servant, Oh Sweet One,
In Thy mercy
Consider him as dust beneath Thy feet.
Ah, how I long for the day
When, in chanting Thy Name, the tears will spill down
From my eyes, and my throat will refuse to utter

Its prayers, choking ad stammering with ecstasy,
When all the hairs of my body will stand erect with joy?



Ah, how I long for the day
When an instant's separation from Thee, Oh Govinda,
Will be as a thousand years,
When my heart burns away with its desire
And the world, without Thee, is a heartless void.
Prostrate at Thy feet let me be, in unwavering devotion,
Neither imploring the embrace of Thine arms
Nor bewailing the withdrawal of Thy Presence
Though it tears my soul asunder.
Oh Thou, who stealest the hearts of Thy devotees,
Do with me what Thou wilt-
For Thou art my heart's beloved, Thou and Thou alone.

A person who is really religious feels an acute sense of love for his Lord. For example, let us see the following case of a lover of Shyama (Lord Srikrishna):

"Wherever I turn my eyes, I find
Shyama and Shyama alone visible everywhere.
In the streets, on the bathing ghats,
in the alleys, in the orchards, in the
trees, in the creepers, in the gardens,
in the groves, in the doorways, on
the walls, on the thresholds, on
the windows, in the gardens, in the
diamonds, in the necklaces, in the
body, in the woodlands, in the
bowers, in the Gopis, in the cows,
in the herds of cattle in Gokula, in the lightning and
in the clouds.
It is Krsna, again, who has occupied my mind and eyes."

A poet has stated:

"Love is the essence of God, and

God is the embodiment of Love.
Though one in essence, they appear
as two, like the sun and the sunshine."[2]

The Narada Bhakti Sutras declare:

"The nature of this divine love cannot be described in words, like the experiences of a dumb person. This love manifests itself in some rarely fortunate and qualified medium (viz. a devotee who has developed absolute indifference to worldly enjoyments). This love is beyond the range of three Gunas i.e. Satva, Rajas and Tamas, is untainted by desire, constantly growing, ceaseless in flow, and very subtle; it can be understood only through experience. A devotee who attains this sees only this Love, hears only this, and thinks of this alone."[3]

The sentiment built around God may have any colour. But the chief colours of this sentiment are quietism (santa), service (dasya), friendship (sakhya), parental affection (vatsalya) and wifely love (madhurya).

In the sentiments of quietism and service, a devotee feels "God is great and glorious, while I am humble and poor: God is the Lord and Master, while I am His slave."

A feeling of awe and fear dominates in this state. But in the sentiments of friendship, parental affection and wifely love, the relation with the Lord becomes progressively more and more intimate. The most intimate relation is obtained in the wifely relation. Hence, this is the sweetest and most enjoyable type of love. Gopis' love for Srikrishna was of this very type. The Bhagavata tells us that the Gopis had dedicated their hearts and soul to the Lord. They snapped all the worldly ties and enjoyments.[4] It has been stated again and again that the sweetness of this relation is incomparable.

"The Jnani is always replete with the Bliss of God-consciousness; whereas the loving devotees behold the rare beauty of the Lord." The inner deep-seated feeling of a devotee of Lord 'Srikrishna has been very graphically described by Rasakhana, a notable devotee of Krishna and equally noted poet:

**"O Lord, may I have the rare good fortune of being enlisted as a servant of Thine either in this very birth** or even through birth in one of the lower species of animals, so that I may be able to serve your sacred feet. Enviable is the lot of Nanda and the other cowherds of Vraja, who have got Thee, the Supreme Eternal, Blissful Lord for their friend. It is a great privilege to be born in Vraja, and more particularly in Gokula, even as an insect that crawls on earth, for that may afford one an opportunity of sacrificing one's head with the dust of the feet of any of blessed inhabitants of vraja."



This is also the view of the Bhagavata, which inspired many people to walk into the fold of devotion.[5]

Ramanuja, a prominent philosopher and religious teacher of India, gives utmost importance to devotion, and gives the characteristic features of a real devotee.

"Firstly, the Bhakta's only happiness consists in being with God, and his misery in being without God; Secondly, the Bhakta attributes all his afflictions to his own guilt; thirdly, the Bhakta has implicit belief that all beings are subject to God's sovereign rule. Hence, the Bhakta is free from every trace of enmity. He who possesses these qualifications comes to the Lord. This implies resting in blessed enjoyment of the Divine."[6]

Vallabha, another religious thinker of India, too gives foremost importance to devotion. He has described in his Madhurastaka that Bhakti is marked by supreme sweetness. And he declares what we all should seek the refuge of the Lord. The true Bhakti is 'nirguna' Bhakti i.e. it is devoid of any desire of getting some thing in return. He has drawn inspiration from the Bhagavata in this respect. A selfless, desireless, spontaneous devotion for the Lord has to be cultivated. A true devotee feels and declares that the Lord is my sole refuge (krsna eva gatirmama)

Even Sankara, the foremost philosopher of India, who is supposed to be a follower of the path knowledge, has been charmed by the path of devotion and has accepted its significance.

According to him, Bhakti is an instrument of attaining liberation.[7] Sankara visualizes three stages in devotion. In the first stage, the devotee considers himself to be just a servant of the Supreme (tasyaivaham). In the Second stage, he thinks that the Lord belongs to him (mamaivasau).[8] And in the third and the last stage, he thinks that he himself is That (Sa evaham). A wise and enlightened devotion thus leads an individual to the fundamental truth of philosophy. A mere ritualistic and unprogressive devotion does not appeal to the mind of Sankara. Even if one takes baths after baths in the sacred river Ganges, even if one undertakes fasts after faths, even if one gives alms and charities to innumerable persons, one shall not get liberation. Liberation comes only when the knowledge of the Supreme is gained. For him Lord Srikrsna is no other than the Brahman, the Infinite. That is why he prays "Lord, give me your darsana."(8) Sankara rises to the highest ladder of devotion, when he states,

> "Lord, though it is true that there is no difference between you and myself (from the standpoint of ultimate truth). Yet I belong to you and not vice versa. A ripple belongs to the sea, and the sea never belongs to the ripple."[9]

Answering the question "What is difficult to get?" he says

> "The devotion for Hari" Replying to another question "By which process a man can attain liberation ?", he states "By cultivating devotion for Mukunda."[10]

Sankara tells us in his work 'Prabodha Sudhakara' that there are two kinds of Bhakti, one subtle and the other gross. In the beginning there is gross Bhakti, and only later on subtle form of Bhakti is attained.[11] In the initial stage a person is drawn towards God by some mundane desire. He wants peace of mind, or seeks riches or something else of the type. But by and by, he rises higher and higher in the rungs of devotion and finally, if this progress is kept intact, he lands in the realm of subtle Bhakti, where his mind is free from every tinge of wordliness.

India from its very beginning had recognized the importance of Bhakti which is the best form of religious consciousness. We find in the Vedas and Upanisads utterings of devotion. The Bhagavata and other Puranas gave devotion a majestic form. And the diverse saints that flourished in India made this heritage of devotion still more rich, still more popular and attractive. The celebrated Bhagavadgita gives us a description of Bhakti Yoga i.e. the pathway of God realization through devotion. It declares



> "Through devotion one comes to know the Supreme in reality. His nature, His real Being. And when this is done, a person enters into the Real."[12]

The Bhagavadgita tells us that the path of knowledge is too difficult for an ordinary person to persuade him to follow it.[13] Devotion is the easiest and most attractive way of approaching God and the final truth. Without devotion knowledge is barren.

It has been rather universally stated that there are nine types of devotion. These are only, in fact, nine methods of inculcating a devotional attitudes. Hence, the nine typs of devotion are really speaking nine ways of seeking love of the Lord.

For example, sravana means hearing of spiritual knowledge. We shall have to accept that without hearing no headway, either in the domain of knowledge or in the field of devotion is possible. One must first of all hear what one does not know. Only then one can move in a specific direction. Even when a person reads or studies, he hears what he reads or studies. Even in the cases of recalling or remembering anything, one can be said to hear in the subtle way the object of his recall. Similarly, when a person is instructed by his preceptor, he has to listen to him carefully. Only then he can do the right thing.Unless one listens, one cannot understand the meaning of a teaching. Thus, one develops love for God through sravana or listening constantly. It is quite evident that the content of hearing becoms clearer and clearer with the passage of time with the result that attachment with Lord becomes thicker and thicker. The faith of the listener too shall become more and more profound. Unflinching faith is the first condition of devotion.

Kirtan means recitation of the glories of God. Kirtan too stimulates an attitude of devotion. It is a kind of public prayer and contains a force of suggestion. The accompaniment of music and the instruments of music heighten the feelings of devotion all the more. The pitch of one's devotion is bound to increase by such recitals of God's glories. Caitanya used to give utmost importance to it.

Smarana or remembering the Name of the Lord also is very helpful. If anybody remembers God repeatedly every day, he is sure to be drawn towards the Lord mentally and psychologically. Thus smarana is thus a way of inculcating a spirit of devotion.

Pada-sevana means taking resort to the feet of the Supreme. It may start with touching the feet of an idol, which is the symbol of God. It leads to a feeling of becoming a true servant of God. Who shall not feel overwhelmed when he would find that his master is a spring of supreme strength, helpfulnss, kindness, knowledge etc. ? Thus, pada-sevana leads to dedication.

Archana or worship means bodily or mental worship of God. It also implies offering God the things one has got out of affection and love. It is but natural that this worship should develop attachment for the Lord and detachment from the things of this world.

Namaskara implies bowing down or lying prostrate before an image of God. It implies a state of mind which is untwisted by any trace of the ego and which is replete with a sense of sincere humility. This humility is essential for a true devotee because so long as the ego is alive, true devotion cannot be generated.

Dasya or the service of an idol of God signifies an attitude of mind which considers God as the Master. A person who has inculcated this spirit shall be ever prepared to do any job such as cleansing a temple or helping a person devoted to God and extending shelter to the poor and the needy. Such a person experiences joy in serving God in every manner.

Sakhyam or friendship of God is a feeling that God is a friend of a devotee. He is very outspoken and loves God just



as a true friend lovs his friend. It indicates an attitude of utter sincerity. But the culmination of devotion is found in Atmanivedana. Here we find a sense of utter dedication and surrender. It signifies a complete merging of one's personality in God. Philosophically it means effacing the ego completely and becoming the Supreme just as the Gopis became Krsna and forgot their physical identity.

One can accept any type of devotion, suiting one's temperament. Every mode of worship can lead one to the destination.

But there is another way of thinking too which is possible about these modes of worship. One usually begins from smarana and ends in atmanivedana. The final step of eradicating the ego can come only at the stage of atmanivedana. The Bhagavadgita declares:

> "Seek refuge in God alone with all your being"[14] and "Fix your mind on the Lord, be devoted to Him, worship Him, and bow to Him."[15] and ultimately "Surrender all duties to the Lord, and seek refuge in Him alone. You shall be absolved from all problems. There is no need to grieve."[16]
>
> Real religious consciousness is the highest state of Bhakti or devotion, a state of complete merger in the Lord.

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# 7

# The Self

The most important question an individual can ask himself is "Who am I?" It is true that an ordinary person never puts this question to himself. For him there is no need of such a question. But a lover of truth cannot brush this question aside. Those who take life at its surface, happily, never bother about such questions. But a person who intends to know the truth constantly tries to know the answer of such questions. Such lovers of truth have flourished in the world in every age. But they flourished most at the time of the Upanisads, which show an unsurpassable spirit of inquirying about the ultimate truth. Let us take the following example. The Chandogya Upanisad[1] tells us about the quest of self pursued by Indra the chief of the gods and Virocana, the chief of demons.

'It was said of old:

> "The Self, which is free from impurities, from old age and death, from grief, from hunger and thirst, which desires nothing but what it ought to desire, and resolves nothing but what it ought to resolve, is to be sought after, is to be inquired about, is to be realized. He who learns about the Self and realizes it obtains all the worlds and all desires."

The gods and demons both heard of this truth, and they thought to themselves:

"Let us seek after and realize this Self, so that we may obtain all the worlds and desires."

Thereupon India from the gods, and Virochana from the demons, went to Prajapati, the renowned teacher. For thirty-two years they lived with him as pupils. Then Prajapati asked them why had both lived with him so long.

"We have heard," they replied, "that one who realizes the Self obtains all the worlds and all desires. We have lived here because we want to learn of this Self."

Thereupon Prajapati observed:

"That which is seen in the eye, that is the Self. That is immortal, that is fearless, and that is Brahman."

Indra and Virochana asked

"Sir, is that the Self which is seen reflected in the water, or in a mirror?"

The reply given was

"The Self is indeed seen reflected in these." Then Prajapati added "Look at yourselves in the water, and whatever you do not understand, come and tell me about it."

Thereupon, Indra and Virochana looked at their reflections in the water and then returned to the stage and told him.

"Sir, we have seen the Self. We have seen even the hair and the nails."

Then Prajapati asked them to put on their best clothes and look again in the water. They obeyed him and came back to the sage, and observed:

"We have seen the Self, exactly like ourselves, adorned in the finest clothes of ours."

Prajapati said,

"The Self is indeed seen in these. The Self is immortal and fearless, and it is Brahman"



Thereupon the pupils were satisfied and went away.

But Prajapati lamented

"Both of them departed without analysing or discriminating, and without truly comprehending the Self. Whosoever follows a false doctrine of the Self is bound to perish."

Now Virochana, satisfied for his part that he had found out the Self, returned to the demons and began to teach them that the body alone is to be worshipped, that the body alone is to be served, and that he who worships the body and serves the body gains both worlds, this and the next. Such doctrine is, in very truth, the doctrine of the demons. But Indra, on his way back to the gods, realized the uselessness of this knowledge. He thought

"As this Self seems to be well-adorned when the body is well-adorned, well-dressed, when the body is well dressed, so will it be blind when the body is blind, lame when the body is lame, deformed when the body is deformed. When the body dies, this same self will also die. In such knowledge I see no good."

So he returned to Prajapati and requested him to give him further instruction. Prajapati asked him to live for another thirty two years, after which duration he instructed him:

"That which moves about in dreams, enjoying sensuous delights and clothed in glory, that is the Self. That is immortal, that is fearless, and that is Brahman."

Pleased with what he had heard, Indra again departed. But before he reached the other gods, he realized the uselessness of this knowledge too. He thought

"True it is that this Self is not blind when the body is blind, nor lame when the body is lame or hurt. But even in dreams it is conscious of many sufferings. Hence, this doctrine too cannot be proper." Thus Prajapati taught the real doctrine of the Self to Indra step by step. Indra again approached Prajapati for

the true doctrine of the Self. Prajapati gave him third explanation. "When a man is in sound sleep, free from dreams, and at perfect rest-then is he the Self. The Self is immortal and fearless, and it is Brahman."

Again Indra reflected on this teaching and found it inadequate. He realized that the Self cannot be equated with mind, because in dreamless sleep mind is annihilated.

He thought:

> "In reality one does not know oneself as this or as that while asleep. One is not conscious in fact of any existence at all. The state of one in deep sleep is next to annihilation. This view too appears to be improper."

Thereupon, Indra again went to Prajapati. This time Prajapati gave him the highest truth about the Self.

> "This body is mortal, always gripped by death, but within it dwells the immortal Self. This Self, when associated in our consciousness with the body, is subject to pleasure and pain; and so long as this association continues, freedom from pleasure and pain can no man find. But as this association ceases, there cease also the pleasure and the pain. Rising above physical consciousness, knowing the Self to be distinct from the senses and the mind-knowing it in its true light-one rejoices and is free."

The Chandogya concludes this discussion by stating:

> "The gods, the luminous ones, meditate on the Self, and by so doing obtain all the worlds and all desires. In like manner, whosoever among mortals knows the Self, meditates upon it, and realizes it-he too obtains all the worlds and all desires."

The above account of the Chandogya gives us all the possible views about the Self. The first view is a materialistic view according to which the body associated with consciousness is the Self. Carvakas in India hold this very view. Even now most of the persons openly or secretly believe that the conscious body is the self and when the body is destroyed, the whole story comes to an end.There is nothing beyond or after the destruction of the body. Such people believe in the gospal of 'eat, drink, and be merry'. The moral and religious teachings are the machinations of the crafty people to hoodwink the simple persons.



But this view cannot be found correct by our reasoning faculty. This view implies that consciousness is produced automatically because of the chance combinations of material atoms as red colour is produced by a combination of betal leaf, lime and nut or molasses originally non-intoxicant becomes intoxicant when allowed to ferment. But even in these days of high advancement in the domain of science, even an ant could not be produced out of matter. Moreover, the body remains even after death and yet a person is dead. This clearly indicates that the body is not soul.

Similarly, mind is not the Self. In the state of Samadhi the mind does not function. All its acts are suspended, and yet the Self continues to live. The Buddhists do not believe in the existence of any permanent self. They are of the view that the Self does not exist. This is the general view about the attitude of Buddhism so far as the question of the self is concerned.

For example, Nagasena tells Milinda that the so-called self is nothing apart from the fleeting sensations. Buddha used to say that love for the Atman is like the blind passion of a foolish lover for a very pretty damsel (janapadakalyani), about whose existence, residence, colour, size, build etc. no information is available even to the lover. He also used to say that to make an attempt to understand the Self is like trying to reach the skies by using a ladder. Nagarjuna stated that the self is neither identical nor different from the five skandhas. Chandrakirti declared that Atman is the cause of all sufferings and demerits and that a Yogi should deny its ultimate reality. Shantideva stated that just as when one goes on taking off the layers of a plantain trunk or an onion nothing would remain, similarly if one goes on examining the self, one will come to the conclusion that it does not exist.

But such criticisms of the Atman are based on equating the Atman with the ego, the sense of 'I'. If the Buddhist theory

of memory is accepted, the continuity of human existence becomes impossible and even the facts of momentary cannot be accounted for. The practical life too shall become impossible, because it will be impossible to hold any person responsible for his act. The perpetrator of the crime shall be destroyed the next moment. Hence, nobody can be held responsible for his good or bad act. The Jain philosophy is of the opinion that consciousness is the essence of the soul (cetanalaksno jivah). However, the degrees of consciousness present in jivas vary according to the obstacles of karmas. The lowest soul is a material atom which appears to be immobile, but in fact has a dormant consciousness. The soul in its intrinsic nature possesses infinite faith, infinite knowledge, infinite bliss and infinite power. Jainism is of the opinion that although every jiva is essentially consciousness, there is a plurality of selves.

Now the problem is that if every soul is essentially consciousness, what is the ground of thinking that there are innumerable selves. It is also held that the self is formless, but it takes the form of the body which it illuminates. How can it be possible that what is formless takes any form? Moreover, Jainism believes in the existence of other categories. What is the exact relation of these categories? How are they corelated? If karma is pudgala or matter, how can it come in contact with consciousness ? Who brings about a contact between them? Thus, we find many logical difficulties in accepting the theory of the self propounded by the Jain philosophy.

The Vaisesika philosophy also holds the reality of seven padarthas. One of the padarthas is Dravya or substance. Atman is only one of the substances out of the nine substances accepted by Vaisesika. Atman or selves are many in number and every self is independent. Every self has a consciousness. But consciousness is not the essence of a self. Consciousness is an adventitious attribute possessed by a self, because the self does not possess the quality during sleep. Self is merely a substratum of consciousness. Like the Vaisesika, the Nyaya system also holds that there are many selves and every individual self is merely a substratum of the



quality of consciousness, which is not its essence but only an accidental property.

Both these views about the selves are defective. Both are pluralistic. The defect of pluralism is that it cannot explain how different and distinct substances come in contact. Even the God accepted by the Nyaya is quite helpless, because all other things are co-external with Him. God is merely a carpenter and not the creator of the universe. It is to be noted further that by declaring that consciousness is an adventitious quality of the self, the very nature of the self has been destroyed. Even our ordinary common sense tells that a self suns consciousness is inert matter and cannot account for thinking feeling etc. which appear to be closely associated with a self.

Thus, we have to conclude that the views of the self as advocated by the systems of Vaisesika and the Nyaya are unsatisfactory.

Now, let us turn to the Samkhya and Yoga view of the self. Yoga accepts the ontology of the Samkhya with minor difference. Hence, we can include the Yoga school under the head of the Samkhya system.

The Samkhya school holds that there are only two substances viz. Purusa and Prakrti. Purusa is consciousness. It is pure and transcendental consciousness. It is the silent witness and the neutral seer. It is called naistraigunya, udasina, akarta, kevala, madhyastha, drsta and jnata. The following grounds have been mentioned to prove the existence of the Purusa, who has got nothing to do with inert Prakrti from which the whole creation evolves and to which the whole creation returns ultimately.

1. All compound objects exist for the Purusa. The body, senses the world all are meant for the Purusa sanghataparathatvat.
2. All objects are the product of the three gunas. The existence of three gunas logically imply the existence of something beyond them- trigunadiviparyayat.

3. All knowledge necessarily presupposes the existence of the self. The self is the ground of empirical knowledge. adhisthanat.
4. Inert Prakrti cannot be the enjoyer of the objects. Prakrti is in fact an object of enjoyment (bhogya). Therefore, there must an enjoyer of Prakrti (bhokta). That enjoyer is Purusa. - bhoktrbhavat.
5. We find in this world that some persons try to run away from the worldly objects and seek liberation. This aspiration for salvation implies that there must be somebody who seeks liberation in as much as he is different from worldly things. That is Purusa. - kaivalyartham pravrtteh.

Having thus proved the existence of Purusa, the Samkhya proceeds to add that there is a plurality of selves. The arguments put forth for the purpose are as stated herein below:

(1) We find that there is a difference in birth and death. Some are born, some are dead, some remain. There is no uniformity in birth and death. If self had been only one, then such difference should not have been present. Therefore, there are different and divergent selves.

(2) If there were only one self, then liberation or bondage would have been universal. Liberation of one should have meant liberation of all. Similarly, activity of one would have meant activity of all. But this is not the case.

(3) We find difference in the existing Purusas too. In one satva dominates, in the other, rajas dominates, in still other the tamas is dominant. If there were only one self, then this difference would not have been there.

But even this view of the self is not correct. If the Samkhya holds that the Purusa is beyond the three gunas,



how can the Prakrti be influenced by it? Similarly, if the Purusa is really distinct from Prakrti, how can it think itself bound due to the influence of Prakrti? Moreover, if Purusa is merely consciousness, then how is it possible to distinguish between Purusas? What is the reason of thinking that Purusas are many? Thus, the defects of this type of thinking is obvious.

The supporters of the Mimamsa school too have their views about the self. They are of the opinion that the self is an eternal, omnipresent, ubiquitous, infinite substance. It is the substratum of consciousness. It is the real knower, enjoyer and doer of actions. It is different from the body, the senses, the mind etc. The body is merely a vehicle of enjoyment (bhogayatana); the senses are the instruments of enjoyment (bhogasadhana) and the internal feelings and the external objects are the objects of enjoyment (bhogavisaya). According to Prabhakara, the self is infact inert. The selves are many.

But this view too appears to be wrong. If the self is essentially unconscious, how consciousness, its contradictory quality, can come in it? And if all selves are inert in nature, why should we not call them just matter? Where is the point of difference in them?

Therefore, now let us try to consider the view of the self associated with the name of Sankara, the great thinker of the Advaita system. This view is non-dualistic in nature.

Sankara has stated that there is one reality and that reality is Brahman or the Atman. People have tried to prove the existence of God in a way indicating as if He is an existence lying outside the self. That is why the several proofs of God e.g. cosmological, moral, teleological, pragmatic etc. have failed to achieve the objective. But if one starts from one's own self, the things shall be clearer and surer. One cannot doubt the existence of the doubter. If the existence of the doubter is doubted the doubt itself becomes impossible. Hence, if God is to exist He cannot be different from the self. If 'I' am not God, God cannot exist. At least His existence can be doubted. I must dig my 'I' to find out God. Of course, I

must try to know the real nature of 'I' or the self. The five aspects of this 'I', according to the Taittiriya Upanisad are anna (matter), prana (life), manas (mind), vijnana (intelligence) and ananda (bliss). These aspects have a progressively higher value. Thus life is more important than matter and bliss is the most important of all. One must go deeper and deeper to understand the real nature of the self. It does not mean that the aspect of matter is illusory; it only means that everything being an expression of the self, the essential nature of the self is even beyond these five sheaths, because the real nature of the self is a matter of inner realization and not a matter of description. The real nature of the self is immortality, not being affected by anything in any circumstances. It is sat, chit, anand.

Swami Vivekananda has very beautifully expressed the Sankara's view about the self in the following stanza of his poem The Song of the Sanyasin:

> 'They know not truth who dream such vacant dreams
> As father, mother, children, wife, and friend.
> The sexless Self. whose father He ? whose child ?
> Whose friend, whose foe is He who is but One ?
> The Self is all in all, none else exists;
> And thou art That, Sanyasin bold. Say-
> 'Om Tat Sat, Om'
> There is but one-The Free-The Knower-Self
> Without a name, without a form or stain.
> In Him is maya, dreaming all this dream.
> The Witness, He appears as Nature, Soul.
> Know thou art That, Sanyasin bold, say
> 'Om Tat Sat, Om.'[2]

It is to be noted that according to Sankara this world, this plurality that we find, has merely phenomenal existence. It is because of the influence of maya that this universe appears to be real. When we are able to realise the truth, we realize that the Atman or the Brahman alone is the sole reality.

Sankara tells us-

"And that other entity which reveals consciousness is the Self, the intelligence is different from consciousness." (Bhasya on Brhadoranyaka)[3]



"The Self if not a thing unknown to anybody at any time, not a thing to be reached (attained) or got rid of, or acquired."[4] "Just as there is no need for any external evidence to know one's own body, so also there is no need for any external evidence to know one's self which is nearer than the body."

"The process of valid knowledge is dependent on Atman (the knower). So the Atman has to be posited before the process of knowledge commences."[5]

"Cognition is self-revealed, and therefore the cogniser too is self-realed."[6]

I will conclude this discussion with following words of Vivekananda:

> "What does the Advaitist preach? He dethrones all the gods that ever existed, or ever will exist in the universe and places on that throne the Self of man. the Atman, higher than the sun and the moon, higher than the heavens, greater than this great universe itself. No books, no scriptures, no science can ever imagine the glory of the Self that appears as man, the most glorious God that ever was, the only God that ever existed, exists, or ever will exist. I am to worship, therefore, none but myself.. To whom shall I bow down ? I salute my Self. To whom shall I go for help? Who can helf me, the Infinite Being of the universe ?"[7]

Sankara's following words express the truth in a very succint form: When the ultimate truth is grasped:

"The ego has disappeared. I have realized my identity with Brahman and so all my desires have melted away. I have risen above my ignorance and my knowledge of this seeming universe. What is this joy that I feel ? Who shall measure it ? I know nothing but joy, limitless, unbounded.

> "The ocean of Brahman is full of nectar-the joy of the Atman. The treasure I have found there cannot be described in words. The mind cannot conceive of it.

My mind fell like a hailstone into that vast expanse of Brahman's ocean. Touching one drop of it, I melted away and became one with Brahman. And now, though I return to human consciousness, I abide in the joy of the Atman."

"Where is this universe? Who took it away ? Has it merged in something else ? A while ago, I beheld it-now it exists no longer. This is wonderful indeed.

"Here is the ocean of Brahman, full of endless joy. How can I accept or reject anything ? Is there anything apart or distinct from Brahman ? "Now, finally and clearly, I know that I am the Atman, whose nature is eternal joy. I see nothing. I hear nothing. I know nothing that is separate from me."[8]

And then the final suggestion"

"The self-luminous Atman, the witness of all, is ever present within your heart. This Atman stands apart from all that is unreal. Know it to be yourself, and meditate upon it unceasingly."[9]

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# 8

# Liberation

Liberation is the most important concept of Indian philosophy and religion. According to the Indian view, there are four supreme objectives of an individual viz. Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. First of all an individual should begin his life by cultivating a spiritual attitude (dharma) towards life. If this attitude is not developed, an individual leads a beastly life. There is one significant point that differentiates a man from an animal. Sex, parental instinct, eating etc. are common to man and animal. The differentiating point is spirituality which is the source of human excellences found in a man. After a development of spirituality, a person should try to earn money. Money has its own value. Our bodily necessities need money. We must have food,we must have a house, we need clothes, and we need even entertainment. Not only an individual needs these all, every member of a family has to meet all these and such other mundane needs. All this can be done only through money. Hence, money must be earned. But this earning of money should always be through fair means. Our spiritual background ensures this. Once money is earned honestly and diligently, one must try to fulfil one's earthly desires. We must not be unfair to our mundane aspirations. Of course, here again our spiritual background shall help us and will not allow us

to indulge into wonton acts. But the supreme aim of life is liberation. Liberation implies freedom from the pains and miseries that mark our human life for ever. So long as one has a body, one cannot avoid the currents of pains and agonies that surround our life. A sensible man shall therefore try to reach a state which shall be untouched by these pains. Liberation is a state where worldly pains and problems are totally absent. It is a state of eternal bliss and quiet. This state cannot be obtained automatically. One has to make a sincere effort to secure this state. The spiritual attitude toward life helps us in moving towards the supreme aim of human life. Once this state is obtained, there is no rebirth, no transmigration.

Liberation is a state of spiritual perfection. It is a state of realization of the real nature of the self. When this state is reached the usual miseries and problems that characterise human life disappear for ever.

All Indian schools of philosophy accept liberation as the final aim of human life. In order to make the realization of this state possible, Indian culture has accepted four stages of human life, viz. Brahma-caryasrama, Grahasthasrama, Vanaprasthasrama and Sanyasasrama. This division helps a person in remembering final and ultimate aim of life. Although the Indian philosophical schools accept liberation as the ultimate objective of life, there is at times a difference of opinions on the nature of liberation itself.

According to Jainism, karma (action) is the uniting link between the soul and the body. Kasaya or sticky substances, ignorance of truth and passions like anger, greed, pride and delusion are responsible for the attraction of the matter (karmic matter) in the soul. Asrava (flow) is the name of that state in which the karmic matter actually begins to flow towards the soul to bind it. This position can be ended through samvara (stoppage) made possible due to a practice of right faith, knowledge and conduct. The result is that the existing matter in the soul is destroyed. This is known as Nirjara. When every particle of matter is destroyed in the soul, the soul shines in its original and real nature of infinite faith, knowledge, bliss and power. This is the state of Moksha or



salvation. Kevalajnana is obtained and the bondage destroyed for ever.

Buddhism believes in the ideal of Nirvana. Nirvana has a negative meaning when it is understood in the sense of blowing out all the desires and passions. It is like the extinction of the flame of a lamp. Liberation thus implies cessation of mental activities (cittavrttinirodha). It implies the destruction of the five skandhas which give an individual an impression of the existence of the self. But there are thinkers in Buddhism who take the term Nirvana in a positive sense too, it is a state of positive bliss. It is the highest and imperishable state of realization (nibbanam padam accutam). It gives bliss here as well as hereafter (iha nandati pecca nandati).

The Nyaya system too is of the opinion that the cause of bondage is ignorance. Through worship of God, devotion and self, surrender, it is possible to obtain the state of liberation. Liberation is a release of the soul from the bondage of pain and suffering for ever. But in the state of liberation, there is no bliss, because according to this school, consciousness is an adventitious quality of the soul, and not its inherent nature.

The Samkhya system holds the view that Purusa is by nature free and consciousness. It is the ego and not Purusa which is bound. When discrimination between the nature of Purusa and Prakrti is obtained, the self becomes liberated as the Purusa realizes its original pure being. The ego that is responsible for the idea of identification of body (Prakrti) and the self (Purusa) has to be destroyed through the right knowledge of the respective natures of Purusa and Prakrti. When the realization of the reality dawns, the self becomes liberated. His sense of identification is destroyed. But in this state of liberation there is no bliss or pleasure, because pleasure is co-related with pain. Moreover, pleasure is the result of Satva guna, while the state of liberation is a state that transcends all the three gunas. In fact, according to the Samkhya, bondage and liberation both are phenomenal, because in actuality Purusa being pure consciousness is quite distinct from the Prakrti, which is inert and the seat of all changes and modifications taking place in the universe.

Purusa is beyond any change, modofication or destruction. If Purusa were really under bondage, it can never destroy bondage. Bondage is related with Prakrti. Bondage, liberation and transmigration belong to Prakrti (samsarati badhyate mucyate ca nanasrayi prakrtih). Samkhya also holds that liberation can be obtained in this very life, because when once the truth is realized the ego cannot misguide the Purusa. Ego itself is a product of Prakrti. Hence, when the truth is known, the Purusa cannot be misled by the ego. The result is that the self becomes unattached to the acts. The body continues to exist till the effects of the past acts are not exhausted. But despite this body, the self becomes liberated. And finally, when the body is destroyed, the Purusa gets 'videha mukti'. Ramanuja, who holds the Visistadvaita view, has his own peculiar view about liberation. He is of the view that liberation can be obtained by the grace of God alone. This grace can be earned through complete dedication and self-surrender to God. In the state of liberation, the self realizes his union with God as His body, His part, His attribute. Thus, according to Ramanuja, release should not be understood as freedom in embodiment. Rather, it is freedom from embodiment. The self realizes that it is a part of the body of God and is consciousness by natue. It has nothing to do with matter, which is a also a body of the Supreme, but unconscious by nature. Liberation is not the merging of the self into God, but only the direct intuitive realization by the self of its own essential nature as a mode of God. There is no jivanamukti, because as long as the body remains, karmas persist, and as long as karmas persist, the self cannot gain its intrinsic purity. Hence, real liberation comes only after the fall of the body.The liberated self does not become identical with Brahman. But it becomes similar to Brahman (Brahmaprakara).

Sankara, however, has a different view about liberation. He believed in the theory of non-dualism according to which ontologically the Brahman is the sole reality. There is no difference between the self and the Brahman. 'Tat twam asi' (Thou art That) 'Aham brahmasmi' (I am Brahman) are philosophically true statements. He writes in vivekacudamani:



> "Longing for liberation is the will to be free from the fetters forged by ignorance - beginning with ego-sense and so on, down to the physical body itself-through the realization of one's true nature."

He gives the experience of an illumined soul in the following words:

> "The ego has disappeared. I have realized my identity with Brahman and so all my desires have melted away. I have risen above my ignorance and my knowledge of the seeming universe. What is this joy that I feel ? Who shall measure it ? I know nothing but joy, limitless and unbounded. The ocean of Brahman is full of nectar-the joy of the Atman. The treasure I have found there cannot be described in words. The mind cannot conceive of it. My mind fell like a hailstone into that vast expanse of Brahman's ocean. Touching one drop of it, I melted away and became one with Brahman. And now, though I return to human consciousness, I abide in the joy of the Atman.
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> Where is this universe? Who took it away? Has it merged in something else? A while ago, I beheld it-now it exists no longer. This is wonderful indeed.
>
> Here is the ocean of Brahman, full of endless joy. How can I accept or reject anything? Is there anything apart or distinct from Brahman? Now, finally and clearly, I know that I am Brahman (Atman), whose nature is eternal joy. I see nothing.I hear nothing. I know nothing that is separate from me."

It is because of the influence of the Maya that the self considers itself to be body and becomes happy and unhappy at the events occurring in life.

The knower of the Brahman becomes Brahman himself.

In liberation nothing new takes place. The only thing that happens is that the individual soul realizes its Brahmanhood. The individual soul forgets its ultimate nature because of ignorance. Liberation is attained when this ignorance is destroyed. (moksapraptibandhanirttimatram eva atmaj-

nanasya phalam). First jivanmukti is attained. Just as a slough cast off by a snake lies on an ant-hill similarly does this body lie. Final libertion (Videhamukti) is obtained after the fall of the body. Just as a potter's wheel moves on revolving for some time even after the push is discontinued, in the same way the body continues to exist even after the attainment of knowledge. But every attachment with the body is put to an end. The body continues to experience the fruits of previous actions till they are exhausted, much like an arrow delivered from a bow that moves on till its moving strength becomes ineffective. But as due to mental detachment even after an action no new attachment is born, the actions fail to bind a liberated man. The Bhagavadgita calls liberation Brahman-nirvana i.e. absorption in Brahman or seeking identity with Brahman. This supreme state can be attained in life itself. One need not wait for the death. Thus, the Gita also advocates the ideal of Jivanmukti. The description of this state given by the Gita is stated here in below:

Absorbed in Brahman
He overcomes the world.

Brahman is one,
Changeless, untouched by evil;
What home have we but Him ?

The enlightened, the Brahman-abiding,
Calm-hearted, unbewildered,
Is neither elated by the pleasant
Nor saddened by the unpleasant.

His mind is dead
To the touch of the external:
It is alive
To the bliss of the Atman.
Because his heart knows the Brahman
His happiness is for ever. (V- 19-21)

All consumed
Are their imperfections,
Doubts are dispelled,
Their senses mastered,



Their every action
Is wed to the welfare
Of fellow-creatures.

Such are the seers
Who enter Brahman
And know nirvana. (V-25)
Only the Yogi
Whose joy is inward,
Inward his peace,
And his vision inward
Shall come to Brahman
And know nirvana. (V-24)

The entire attitude of a liberated soul is different from that of an ordinary person.

His heart is with Brahman
His eyes in all things
Sees only Brahman
Equally present.
Knows his own Atman
In every creature,
And all creation
Within that Atman.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa has given a lucid description of a person who has attained Jivanamukti. He had a liberated soul. Hence, his description has a solid base.

"Few can stay long on the roof. Those who reach samadhi and attain Brahman return to the lower plane of consciousness and then realize that it is he who has become man and the universe. The singer cannot hold to the highest note very long. He comes down to the lower notes. Similarly, the man of realization comes back from the transcendental consciousness and perceives the world of relatively, and though he sees the world, he sees Brahman everywhere." (Kathamrta, vol. III, p.11)

Aurbindo in his work The Life Divine writes:

".....the liberated soul extends its perception of unity horizontally as well as vertically. Its unity with the

transcendantal One is incomplete without its unity with the cosmic many."

A poetic description of the liberated as been given by Aurbindo in his Savitri:

A last and mightiest transformation came.
His soul was all in front like a great sea
Flooding the mind and body with its waves;
His being, spread to embrace the universe,
United the within and the without
To make of life a cosmic harmony,
An empire of the immanent Divine.
In this tremendous universality
Not only his soul-nature and mind-sense
Included every soul and mind in his,
But even the life of flesh and nerve was changd
And grew one flesh and nerve with all that lives;
He felt the joy of others as his joy,
He bore the grief of others as his grief;
His universal sympathy upbore,
Immense like ocean, the creation's load
As earth upbears all beings' sacrifice,
Thrilled with the hidden Transacedent's joy and peace"

J.Krishnamurti has accepted the ideal of liberation, which from his point of view is "the outcome of all life fully matured".

It is "the consummation of life, highly developed, highly cultured, highly evolved."

It is obtained when an individual is able to attain the position of

"the cessation of all desires."

He has stated:

"To be liberated, to live in the realm of the eternal, to be conscious of the Truth means to be beyond birth and death- because birth is of the past and death is in the future-beyond space, beyond past and present and the delusion of time. The man who has attained



such a liberation knows that perfect harmony which is constant and eternally present, he lives unconditionally in that eternity which is 'Now'" (Krishnamurti Early writings, II, p.163).

Thus, we find that there is a uniformity of opinion that the supreme ideal of human life is to attain the state of liberation. Moreover, we can say that liberation is not some thing entirely new. It consists in regaining one's lost purity. Man has a yearning for becoming perfect. This yearning indicates that originally he was perfect. If he had no idea of perfection, why should he entertain an idea of liberation at all ? An aspiration to be free from pain implies a state when one was free from it. When we talk about an ideal of perfection, we do not mean that we were never perfect. We only mean that at present we are imperfect and we have to move to a state which shall not be marked by imperfection. Liberation is thus a state of perfection. It is a state of being eternal because if there is no eternity, there cannot be any perfection. It is a state of going beyond the realm of unhappiness, because if there is unhappiness in liberation, why should we try to attain it? It is a state beyond death and rebirth. If liberation is not beyond death, why should we run after it? Similarly, if liberation does not imply transcending the cycle of birth and rebirth, we should not go after it, because rebirth does bring agonies and miseries.

Liberation, however, does not mean that a person becomes irrelevant to society, or he becomes an island cut off from main land of society. It means a complete transformation of personality. A liberated soul does not have that greed, avarice, anger, selfishness, spirit of pugnacity etc.that delimit one's personality. Being free from these restricting tendencies, he becomes an ideal social being. His sense of 'I' becomes so enlarged that the entire universe appears to be his own self. A liberated soul therefore is an ideal benefector of society.

Not only from the social standpoint, but even from his individual point of view, he is the happiest and most peaceful personality. Discordant notes like greed etc. do not rise in him. Therefore, he is ever free, ever pleased, ever contented.

The ideal of liberation is therefore a very desirable ideal from all points of views-social, individual, physical, spiritual, religious, political, cultural. It is therefore but natural that Indian philosophy and religion accept liberation as the supreme end of human life.

# 9

# Death

Death is a supreme mystery of life. Even our modern advanced scienc has not been able to throw any light on it. The Bhagavadgita tells us that death is inevitable. A person who is born is bound to die. The Mahabharata contains an incident wherein Yaksa asks a very significant question "What is the biggest wonder of the world ?" The answer given is very revealing. The biggest wonder of the world is that even though every person who is born in this world knows that he cannot avoid death, he behaves as if he is immortal. Even the modern existentialism has tried to give due importance to death. It has been stated that since death is an eternal reality, our education with death in view should be our effort.

Witgenstein has expressed a view that death is not an incident of life, because nobody lives to experience death. And yet we find that human rationality has tried to grapple with- this problem or at least has made an attempt to peep into it from the very beginning of rise of rationality. Plato's Phaedo discusses it. Epicurus tried to free man's mind from the terror of death. He was of the opinion that man cannot enjoy life, if he maintains a fear of death in his heart. He framed a dilemma with a view to free man's mind from the fear of death.

We need not be afraid of death, because when we are living, there is no death to be afraid of; and when we die, we either become devoid of existence or secure another birth.

If there is immortality, we should not care for death; and if there is life in future, even then we need not be afraid of death or worry about it. Hence, fear of death is unnecessary.

Indian philosophy has made a very concerted effort to know the secret of death. The Brhadaranyaka Upanisad says that even after death, the subtle body is not destroyed, and the latter is separated from th gross body just as a flower of a mango tree becomes separated from the tree. A person who is bound by his desires and aspirations, has to take another birth and has to accept suitable body. But a person who is free from desires and wants, which are the binding links, casts off his body for ever and becomes liberated.[1]

Man is born because of his actions. But he is free to indulge in action or not to indulge in them. Action should not be taken in the sense of an obvert act. Its most important asepct is an internal process e.g. wanting, desiring, aspiring. External view of an act is not so important. It is the internal longing which is the binding factor. So long as the internal factor of an act is not destroyed, the cycle of birth and rebirth cannot be ended. This internal bond can be destroyed only when the ultimate knowledge of the Supreme is attained and a self realizes "I am the Brahman", 'I am the Real'.

Kathopanisad tells us that there are one hundred important 'nadis' in the heart, which are spread up in the body. When 'prana' comes out through 'susumna nadi' the self is librated. But when the 'prana' goes out through any other 'nadi', rebirth takes place.[2]

Two paths are open before a self after death - pitryana and devayana. If a person is liberated in life i.e. is able to cast off the bonds of desires from the heart, then he goes through devayana, and does not return to the world. Other persons go out through pitr a yana and assume new bodies after death.[3] The Bhagavadgita informs us that an individual self takes that very kind of body, about which he thinks at the time of the death. If he thinks about God alone, he is



liberated. Soul is immortal. It merely takes the new bodies in the way a person puts on new dresses. But we should not forget that an act done without any internal attachment or desire does not yield any fruit just as a boiled seed does not grow. Hence, says the Gita, one must act without any attachment whatsoever to be free from the pangs of repeated births and deaths.

Katha Upanisad tells us:

> "The Self is the omniscient Lord. He is not born. He does not die. He is neither cause nor effect. This Ancient One is unborn, eternal, imperishable; though the body be destroyed, he is not killed.If the slayer think that he slays, if the slain think that he is slain, neither of them know the truth. The Self slays not, nor is he slain .... Soundless, formless, intangible, undying, tasteless, odourless, eternal, without beginning, without end, immutable, beyond nature, is the Self. Knowing him as such, one is freed from death. Smaller than the smallest, greater than the greatest, this Self forever dwells within the hearts of all. When a man is free from desire, his mind and senses purified, he beholds the glory of the Self and is without sorrow." (1.ii.18- 20) It adds:

"The Self , deep-hidden in all beings, is not revealed to all; but to the seers, pure in heart, concentrated in mind-to them is he revealed. The senses of the wise man obey his mind, his mind obeys his intellect, his intellect obeys his ego, and his ego obeys the Self." (1.iii. 12- 13)

Real death comes only when man realizes his inner reality and knows that he is the Brahman. Till then the Self assumes one body after the other in accordance with the nature of his actions. But after the realization of the supreme truth, he becomes liberated. Brhadaranyak tells us

"As the slough of a snake lies cast off on an anthill, so lies the body of a man at death; while he, freed from the body, becomes one with the immortal spirit, the Light Eternal." (iv.1- 7)

The Yoga philosophy rightly points out that in every

being lurks an instinctive fear of death-abhinivesa. This fear is so fierce that it is very difficult to overcome it. It breeds an alienation from the entire environment and breaks a person from inside. But it can be ended only through the realization of the supreme truth. This realization can come only through religion, the, spiritual religion. Mere intellectual effort cannot be helpful. Our discursive intellect merely lands us into confusion. Spiritual truth can come only though spiritual insight. Human intellect is meant for our restricted material world. It is too small and incompetent to grasp the Infinite. Not only this, it only creates an atmosphre of doubt and disbelief. That is why the Bhagadgita warns "People having no faith in this spirituality, failing to reath Me (the Lord) revolve in the paths of the world of death." (IX-3) The Bhagavadgita has, moreovr, inspired people to be free from the instinctive fear of death, because it is based on short- sightedness. It argues:

> "Arjuna, you grieve over those who should not be grieved for, and yet speak like the learned; wise men do not feel sorry over the dead or the living.

In fact, there never was a time when I was not, or when you or these kings were not. Nor is it a fact that hereafter we shall cease to be. Just as boyhood, youth, and old age are attributed to the soul through this body, even so it attains another body. The wise man does not get deluded about this.

O son of Kunti, the contact between the senses and their objects, which give rise to the feelings of heat and cold, pleasure and pain etc. are transitory and fleeting. Therefore, Arjuna, ignore them.

Arjuna, the wise man to whom pain and pleasure are alike, and who is not tormented by these contacts, bcomes eligible for immortality. The unreal has no existence, and the real never ceases to be; both these facts have been realized by the seers of truth.

Know that to be Imperishable, by which all this universe is pervaded; for none can bring about the destruction of this indestructible substance. All these bodies pertaining to the imperishable, indefinable and eternal Self, are spoken of as perishable; Therefore, Arjuna, fight the battle (of life)



They are both ignorant, he who knows the Self to be capable of killing, and he, who taks it as killd; for verily the Self neither kills, nor is killed.

The soul is never born, nor does is die; nor does it come into being after a spell of non-being; for it is unborn, eternal, ever-lasting and priveval. Even though the body is destroyed, it is never destroyed in any way.

How will the man who knows this soul to be imperishable, eternal and free from birth and decay, cause any one to be killed, or kill any one? As a man discarding worn-out clothes, takes up other new ones, in the same way the embodied soul, casting off worn-out bodies, enters into other bodies, which are new.

Weapons cannot cut it, nor can fire burn it; water cannot drench it, nor can wind make it dry.

For this soul is incapable of being cut; it is proof against fire, impervious to water, and undriable in nature. This soul is eternal, omniprsent, immovable, constant and ever-lasting.

This soul is unmanifest; it is unthinkable; and it is spoken of as immutable. Therefore, knowing this as such, you should not grieve." (II.11-25) The Gita then proceeds to adduce another argument:

"And Arjuna, even if you regard this soul as something that costantly takes birth, and constantly dies, you should not feel sorry. For, in that case the death of an individual who is born is certain; and the rebirth of that person who dies, is inevitable. It therefore follows that one should never grieve over an inevitable event." (II.26-27) Indian religion therefore believes that death should not be an object of grieving.

Even in the West, Plato believed in the immortality of soul and its transmigration. Soul has a knowledge of forms, and therefore it is pure and eternal like the forms, because only like can know the like. The second argument that has been put forth is that the soul has knowledge of interpretive and axiomatic truths which have not been acquired in this life. Thus, their recollections proves the prior existence of the soul.

On the basis of justice too,immortality of the soul is proved. If it is presumed that there is no life after death, then the merits and demerits of a person shall remain equally unfruitful and unrewarded. Another notable phlosopher of the West Kant too has accepted the immortality of soul on the basis of morality.

If one wants to say like Savitri
"O Death, I have triumphed over thee within;
I quiver no more with the assault of grief;"
it can be possible only when the knowledge of the Real is realized.

There is no other way leading to eternity.

If a mind does not grasp the eternal truth, it dreads death, who appears to say:

"I only am eternal and endure.
I am the shapeless formidable Vast,
I am the emptiness that men call Space,
I am a timeless nothingness carrying all,
I am the Illimitable, the mute Alone.

I, Death, am He; there is no other God."[4]
But after the realization of the truth, one feels
"Death is a stair, a door, a stumbling stride
The soul must take to cross from birth to birth.

A grey defect pregnant with victory
A whip to lash us towards our deathless state."[5]

The Self being by nature immortal and undying, it never accepts death as the end. It takes repeated births till it achieves its ultimate end of immortality.



**REFERENCES**

1. IV.iii. 35, 36
2. II.iii.16
3. Bhagavadgita VIII-26
4. Savitri pp. 592-3
5. Ibid, p. 600

The following words of Viveknanda deserve attention:

"We have seen that this Self, being beyond the little universe of matter and force and thought, is simple; and as a simple It cannot die. That which does not die cannot live. For life and death are the obverse and reverse of the same coin. Life is another name for death, and death for life. One particular mode of manifestation is what we call life; another particular mode of manifestation of the same thing is what we call death. When wave rises on the top it is life; and when it falls into the hollow it is death. If anything is beyond death, we naturally see it must also be beyond life. I must remind you of the first conclusion that the soul of man is part of the cosmic energy that exists, which is God. We now find that it is beyond life and death. You were never born, and you will never die. What is the birth and death that we see around us ? This belongs to the body only, because the soul is omnipresent. "How can that be ?" you may ask."So many people are sitting here, and you say the soul is omnipresent? "What is there, I ask, to limit anything that is beyond law, beyond causation? This glass is limited; it is not omnipresent, because the surrounding matter forces it to take

that form, does not allow it to expand... But that which is beyond law, where there is nothing to act upon it, how can that be limited ? It must be omnipresent. You are every where in the universe. How is it then that I am born and I am going to die, and all that ? That is the talk of ignorance, hallucination of the brain."

-Jnana Yoga, Advita Ashrama, Calcutta, pp. 286-7.

# 10

# World

One cannot deny the existence of the world. We see the Sun, the moon, and the stars; we feel the touch of the air and the warmth of fire; we feel pleasure and pain, diappointment and elation, health and disease. How can one deny the pleasures of eating and putting on of clothes ? How can deny the luxuries of having very palatial buildings and comforts of life ? The world is thus very much with us, and none of us can deny its existence.

But the most important question of philosophy is "Does whatever we experience exist in reality?" Real is that which never perishes. Whatever is perishable is unreal. Appearance is not always real. The earth appears to be static to us, but really speaking, it is always moving around the Sun. The Sun appears to rise and to set. But reality is that it neither rises nor sets. A stick when put inside water of a river appears to be bent, but the truth is that it not so.

Should we think that the universe as it appears to us is really existent ? Indian Philosophy has two types of answers to offer on this point. One point of view is that the world is eternal. It has existed from the very beginning as it is seen at present. Even at present we find that the objects are products of combinations of atoms. Thus, the universe is the result of the combinations of material objects. This is the



view of the Carvakas. The other schools of Indian philosophy like the Jain, the Nyaya, the Vaisesika etc. too accept the reality of the universe. Even the Samkhya accepts the reality of the universe. It only states that the universe is merely an evolved form of Prakrti. The dualists and pluralists agree that the world and its objects are real.

But these views do not go deep into the matter. The only system of philosophy that goes quite deep in the matter is the Advaita system of the Upanisads and Samkara. Therefore, we should try to understand its views in this connection.

In the Nasadiya Sukta of the Rigveda, we come across the following description:

> "There was then neither what is, nor what is not, there was no sky, nor the heaven which is beyond .........

He from whom this creation arose, whether he made it nor did not make it; the highest seer in the highest heaven, he forsooth knows, or does even he not know."[1]

Thus, the Sukta states that the universe as it is seen by us at present never existed at the beginning. At the beginning existed the indescribable reality called Brahman in the Upanisads. The Aitareya (1-1-1) states-

> "At first there was the Atman alone." Chandogya Upanisad (6-2-1) states"There was only Being (sat) at the beginning, it was one without a second". Brhadaranyaka Upanisad (2-5-19) states "This self is the Brahman".

All the Upanisads agree that the Brahman or the Atman or the Sat (all these being equivalent) is the only reality of the universe. It is remarked that at first, there was Atman or the Brahman. It thought 'I am one, I will be many, 'I will create the worlds.'

The Isa Upanisad tells us "In the heart of all things, of whatever there is in the universe, dwells the Lord." The Mundaka Upanisad (II-i-1 to 4) writes:

> "The Imperishable is the Real. As sparks in-

numerable fly upward from a blazing fire, so from the depths of the Imperishable arise all things. To the depths of the Imperishable they again descend. Self-luminous is that Being, and formless. He dwells within all and without all. He is unborn, pure, greater than the greatest, without breath, without mind.

From him are born breath, mind, the organs of sense, ether, air, fire water, and earth, and he binds all these together."

and adds (ii.1-2):

"He, the self-luminous, subtler than the subtlest, in whom exist all the worlds and all those that live therein-he is, the imperishable Brahman. He is the principle of life. He is speech, and he is mind. He is Real. He is immortal. Attain him, 'O' my friend, the one goal to be attained."

The following of the 'Svetasvatara Upanisad (IV. 2-4) tell the same thing in other words:

"Thou art the fire,
Thou art the sun,
Thou art the air,
Thou art the moon,
Thou art the starry firmament,
Thou art Brahman Supreme:
Thou art the waters-thou,
The creator of all.

Thou art woman, thou art man,
Thou art the youth, thou art the maiden,
Thou art the old man tottering with his staff;
Thou facest everywhere.

Thou art the dark butterfly
Thou art the green parrot with read eyes,
Thou art the thunder cloud, the seasons, the seas.

Without beginning art thou,
Beyond time, beyond space,
Thou art he from whom sprang
The three worlds."



In the same way the peace chant of the Upranisads declares:

"Filled with Brahman are the things we see;
Filled with Brahman are the things we see not;
From out of Brahman floweth all that is;
From Brahman all-yet is he still the same."

The Taittiriya Upanisad (III.1) declaes:

"Know Brahman from whom all these beings grow, by whom the created beings live and unto whom they pass when gone from here." The universe is created by Brahman out of His mysterious power Pradhna or Maya, as stated by the Swetasvatara Upanisad (VI.10):"The one Lord, who has, out of his nature, covered himself like a spider, with threads derived from Pradhana."

Sankara developd this very view in his Advaita philosophy. He based his theory on the principle of Sat-karyavada, according to which effect is merely a form of cause itself. The Samkhya system is of the view that the in effect there is a material change of the cause. But Sankara tells us that the change is merely apparent. Ontologically, there is no difference between the cause and the effect. Empirically, effect appears to be different from the cause. For example, the ornaments made of gold are gold, but one gives them various names like a ring, a necklace etc. in empirical life. From the standpoint of reality, there is no difference between an earthen pot and the earth out of which it is prepared, because after destruction earthern pot becomes earth. Sankara calls the universe phenomenal (mithya) not in the sense of being unreal, but in the sense of its non-reality considered from the standpoint of ultimate reality. Brahman alone is the Real. The universe has emanated from Him, but it dissolves in Him ultimately. Thus, the terms like 'real' and 'false' have to be understood in a relative sense. The universe is not an illusion. To make his point clear, Sankara has given us descriptions of three types of reality-pratiphasika (illusory), vyavaharika (phenomenal or empirical) and parammarthika (ontological). One should not con-

fuse them. When one is under a state of dreaming, one feels that the objects of one's dream are real. But when one wakes up, one experiences that the dream world has vanished and one realizes the falsity of the dream-state. Similarly, one finds the objects of the world real till one realizes the ultimate reality. The world exists even when one realizes the Brahman. But the real nature of visible world becomes visible to him. Hence, the universe has only an empirical reality. Both dreams and the world have passing existence, although there is difference between these two. Falsity of the dream dawns on human mind within a short duration. But the falsity of the universe cannot be realized so easily.

It is quite rational to believe that the universe cannot come out of nothing. Nothing produces nothing alone. Therefore the universe has evolved out of some thing that is quite real. The Bhagavadgita, that is why, tells us that universe is a tree of Asvattha whose roots lie in the Supreme.[2] Evolution is a term that needs certain clarification. Evolution implies that something that is subtle becomes gross. A seed evolves in a tree. The implies that the tree that was hidden in the seed in a subtle form becomes gross. Evolution does not mean that something that is non-existent becomes existent. In this context the arguments given by the Samkhya system in support of Satkaryavada deserve to be given attention.

The Satkaryavada tells us that the effect preexists in the cause even before its manifestation. The arguments advanced in this connection are as stated herein below:

(1) If the effect does not pre-exist in the cause, then no amount of effort can produce it. Can we produce water out of stones or can we produce oil out of sand? Therefore, it is clear that the effect pre-exists in the cause before its manifestation. Certain favourable conditions make the manifestation of the effect possible. For example, pressing of seeds makes the manifestation of oil possible. The activity of efficient cause like the potter and his tools help in the manifestations of a pot that preexisted in clay.



(2) There is a necessary and invariable relation between a cause and its effect. An effect can be produced only from its relative cause. For example, golden ornaments can be produced only out of gold. This again proves that the effect must preexist in a cause.

(3) We find that only specific effects can be producd from specific causes. Curd can be produced only out of milk and a cloth only out of threads. If this would not have been the case, then it would have been possible for any person to produce anything out of anything. This again proves that the effect pre-exists in the cause.

(5) A potent cause alone can produce a desired effect. The potent cause of an effect is that which contains some power that is definitely related to the effect. Power cannot be related to the effect, if the latter does not preexist in the cause in an unmanifested form.

(6) The effect is not different from the cause. For example, an ornament of gold is not different from gold.

(7) We can add to this that the effect sooner or later is reduced to the form of its cause. For example, furniture becomes wood, ornaments become gold, earthen pot becomes clay.

The above arguments are so weighty that they cannot be questioned. There is some difference, however, as to the nature of the effect. One view holds that effect is a state of real modification of its relative cause. But the other view tells that there is no real modification of the cause. The modification is only apparent, and not real. For example, when gold is turned into ornaments, it still remains gold, although for empirical purposes we talk of gold and ornaments. The Advaita holds the latter view and this view has validity. In philosophy, we are concerned with the ontological reality, and not with some phenomenal reality.

We can say, therefore, that the universe is real, as it is a manifestation of God. Empirically, it appears to be different from God, but ontologically it is non-different from the Real. Not only this, ultimately the universe is dissolved in God.

Shri Aurbindo has very beautifully and poetically expressed this very fact in the following words:

"The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone
Has called out of the Silence his mute Force
Where she lay in the featureless and formless hush
Guarding from Time by her immobile sleep
The ineffable puissance of his solitude.
The Absolute, the Perfect, the Alone
Has entered with his silence into space;
He has fashioned these countless persons of one self;
He lives in all, who lived in his Vast alone;
Space is himself and Time is only he."[3]

"He is the maker and the world he made.
He is the vision and he is the seer;
He is himself the actor and the act,
He is himself the knower and the known,
He is the himself the dreamer and the dream."[4]

As the Bhagavata Purana tells us, the Real creates the universe out itself like a spider (II-ix-27) This creation is the divine play. The Absolute plays with its own self in the form of this universe. (II-iv-7) The Absolute creates this universe through its Maya shakti (X-29-1) The Bhagavadgita tells us that the entire universe is pervaded by God. All the beings and the world exist in Him alone. (IX-4) He creates the universe through His power (IX-8). Arjuna saw the cosmic form of the Absolute and was allowed to see the entire world-the animate and the inanimate in that form (XI-7)

The entire universe of names and forms, of beings and enjoyers, of space, time and causality proceeds from the Absolute alone, because it is the only Real, who is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent cause. It is the only creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. It is both the material as well as efficient cause of the world.



There are some persons who raise objection to the Brahman (Absolute) being a creator of the universe like a spider. Some Upanisads and even the works like the Bhagavata Purana maintain that just as a spider produces, maintains and devours cob-web, similarly Brahman creates, maintains and destroys this univers. The objection states that a spider emits saliva, which producs a web, due to its desire of eating insects. The Brahman cannot have any desire. Hence, why should It produce the universe? The answer is that the Brahman is pure consciousness and therefore does not need any outside means to produce the universe. It is devoid of any desire or ambition (aptakamasya ka sprha ?). But it should be noted that logically and ontologically the creation can have only phenomenal reality. The Brahman is eternal and therefore there cannot be change (vikara) or desire (kamana) in it. The universe cannot be produced by any other agency than the Brahman, because the latter is sore reality. Every thing except the Brahman is is non- existent and unreal. The creation has reality only so long as the real knowledge of the Brahman is not obtained. When the real knowledge dawns on the mind of a person, he realizes that nothing but the Brahman exists and this world has no reality from the standpoint of ontological truth. However, this dose not make the existence of the universe irrelevant. For all practical purposes, the world does exist. But the person becomes free from the worldly attachments that bind him to the world and make him an experiencer of pain and misery, births and rebirths.

We can conclude this discussion with the telling words of Vivekananda:

"We now see that all the various forms of cosmic enrgy, such as matter, thought, force, intelligence, and so forth, are simply the manifestation of that cosmic intelligence, or, as we shall call it heneceforth, the Supreme Lord. Everything that you see, feel, or hear, the whole universe is His creation, or to be a little more accurate, is His projection; or to be still more accurate, is the Lord Himself. It is He who is shining as the sun and the stars, He is the mother

earth. He is the ocean Himself. He comes as gentle showers. He is the gentle air that we breathe in, and it is He, who is working as force in the body., He is the speech that is uttered. He is the man who is talking .... It is all He. He Himself is both the material and the efficient cause of this universe, and He is that who gets involved in the minute cell, and evolves at the other end and becomes God again. He it is that comes down and becomes the lowest atom, and slowly unfolding His nature rejoins Himself. This is the mystery of the universe .... This is the only solution of the Cosmos that satisfies the human intellect. In one word, we are born of Him, we live in Him, and unto Him we return."[5]

Ramakrsha Parama Hamsa has narrated the story of a sage who had imbibed the secret of knowledge. One day he got some alms. He sat on a dog and began to eat himself and started feeding the dog too. Many spectators gathered there at this sight. Some called him mad and began to laugh at him. The sage asked them: "Why are you laughing ? Visnu (Brahman) is sitting on Visnu. Visnu is eating Visnu. O Visnu, why are you laughing ? It is thus clear that for a realized soul, the world is nothing but the Brahman Itself. The universe has emanated from It, is preserved by It and is destroyed by It. The world is not different from God. This is the ultimate truth. But it does not mean that our empirical world is also seen in that way. On the mundane level, all the distinctions and differences exist.This is Maya or illusion seen from the ultimate stand-point. It can be transcended only through an inner realization of the supreme truth. However, the empirical and the transcendental levels should not be confounded. Vedanta admits adhikari bheda i.e. distinctions in the knowing capacity of agents. What is true for a child may not be true for a grown up person. A child's attachment to a toy is immense. This attachment is missing in a grown up person. Hence, when it is stated that the world is God, this statement should be understood properly.



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5. Jnana-Yoga, Swami Vivekananda, Advaita Ashram, Calcutta, 1961, p.248, 9
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visnuh khadati visnave
katham hasai re visnuh
sarvam visnumayam jagat.

# 11

## The Problem of Evil

Evil is a major problem of religion. Ordinarily, every religion believes in the presence of God and is of the opinion that He is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the universe. He is extremely kind and takes care of the welfare of his devotees. However, the presence of illness, exploitation, devastation, misery, penury, wickedness etc. are flourishing in this very universe. If God is the creator of the world, all these too must have been created by Him. And if He has created them, how can we call Him kind and gentle. A maker of such things can be called only cruel and hard-hearted who revels in the misery of the people. Such a hard-hearted Being cannot be called God. If it is argued that He has not created all these things because He is extremely kind, then it will imply that there is some power more powerful than God even, because that power has created these undesirable things despite God's kindness and unwillingness to create such things. This will again imply that God is not omnipotent, and therefore He does not deserve to be called God, because the term God means a supreme Being who is omniscient, omnipotent, extremely kind, just and repository of all the excellent qualities that are knwon to ethical philosophy, and for whom Shakespeare sang

> "God shall be my hope,
> My stay, my guide and lantern to my feet."



That is why many religious thinkers have tried to put forth their different views to explain the problem of evil.

Thomas Mopherson is of the view that God is not omnipotent. He writes "It is hardly necessary to say that when God is said to be omnipotent this does not mean that he is able to do all things. There are many things that even God cannot do. He is bound by limitations that may indeed be of his own creation but that, since they exist, are binding on all beings. He could perhaps have made a universe different from this, but as he did not, he is bound by certain fundamental principles that apply throughout this universe."[1]

St.Augustine is of the opinion that evil too has its utility. Like the shadows in a painting, which contribute to the beauty of the whole, evil is necessary for the goodness of the universe. Evil is a defect, a privation of essence (privatio substantiae), an ommission of the good. Good is possible without evil, but evil is not possible without good. Privation of good is considered evil in as much as it implis an absence of something, nature ought to have. According to Augustine, God could have avoided evil, if he willed, but he preferred to use it as an instrument of serving the good.

Augustine has three points to make to explain the presence of evil in the world. First, evil has only a relative status because it is necessary to good. Second, evil is a privation of good. And, third, the responsibility of evil lise on an individual. God is not responsible for it.

Leibniz is also of the opinion that evil acts as a foil to goodness. He adds that virtue gains strength in combating the evil; evil acts as a spur to move in the direction of good.

Even before Augustine and Leibniz, the Stoics had advanced similar arguments in support of evil. They had offered two solutions. First, the world is good; what we call evil, is evil only in a relative sense. Evil enhances the beauty of the world and good like the shadows of a picture. Second, evil is a necessary means of realizing the good.

Spinoza also accepts the fact of evil which acts as an obstacle in the realization of truth. But he is of the opinion

that the distinction of evil and good does not exist in the Absolute. It is the creation of an individual mind.

Josiah Royce expresses the opinion that evil has its own utility. An individual can attain his perfection only through a confrontation with evil.

William Temple is of the opinion that the self-centeredness of an individual is the source of evil. He writes:

> "But man cannot be saved, nor either individual or society attain to perfection, except by the total elimination of self- centredness. Only by disinterested love does man enter into completeness of fellowship with God."[2]

Radoslav A. Tsanoff writes:

> "Evil and perception of it are conditions for heroic recognition and pursuit of value, be it truth, beauty, goodness; powers subjected to strain .... atrophy and eventually disappear."[3]

John Stuart Mill also accepts the presence of evil. He writes:

> "The evidence, therefore, of Natural Theology distinctly imply that the author of the cosmos worked under limitation; that he was obliged to adapt himself to conditions independent of his will, and to attain his ends by such arrangements as those conditions admitted of."[4]

F.R. Tennant is of the view that the evil in the world is the price that one has to pay for morality. He states:

> "Further, man himself does not deem his suffering to be an excessive price to pay for the dignity of his ethical status, once he recognizes sphysical evil to be inevitable in a moral world."[5]

Nicolas Berdyaev is of the view that although misery and evil are found closely related, but they are not one. Misery or unhappiness is not evil in all the circumstances. In fact he considers evil to be mysterious. Sometimes a fight against evil itself becomes evil. For example, a state fights against crime, but its own actions are at tims nothing but evil. Nietzsche considered the state to be the most cruel animal.



Thus, we find that there are different views about evil in the West. Sometimes it appears that evil is the result of seeing th world from a pessimistic point of view. To a pessimist, the universe is nothing but a story of miseries, agonies, oppression and such other things. On the other hand, for an optimist, the universe is full of brighteness. Just as the beauty lies in the eyes of a beholder, in the same way, it seems that the goodness or evil in the world is connected with the attitude of a person looking at the world.

Even though this thing may be considered true in some cases, we cannot assert that evil is subjective and it has no objective existence. The proper explanation of evil is found in Sankara's Advaita. According to Sankara, the Brahman or the Atman alone is the sole reality of the universe. Thus, the only ontological real is the Brahman. Then, why do we find multiplicity and plurality in the universe ? Why do we find good and evil, misery and pleasure, and such other dualities in the universe ? According to Sankara, Maya is responsible for it. Maya is that peculiar power of the Brahman, which induces us to see all those things that we find in the world and hides the real nature of the Brahman. The universe has got only a phenomenal existence. All that we see in the world seems quite real so long as we remain on our empirical level. But once we transcend this level and realize the supreme truth, all this diappears. Then neither the evil nor the good are felt. The absolute reality is beyond all the dualities.

Duality means the world. If anybody considers the world as the sole reality, let him try his utmost, he cannot find an escape from the evil. No doubt this duality is not an illusion, because illusion is subjective and disappears after a while. A piece of rope may be mistaken as a serpent in the dark. But after some time, when the light is brought, the illusion disappears. The world never loses its reality. It can be merely transcended, but not denied.

Some persons may ask "But why does God permit evil ?" This question is useless, because the questioner thinks that it is God who is the creator of the evil, but the fact is that the entire creation is the work of our ignorance of the

supreme Truth. In the Supreme, there is neither good nor bad. It is an individual who attributes many qualities to the quality-less, the gunatita.

If one cannot rise to the position of realization of the Brahmanhood, one can understand at least this that according to the Indian point of view an individual alone is responsible for his miseries and ills. As we sow, so we reap. If we do bad things, bad results appear; and if we do good acts, good results are experienced by us. God never created evil. Individuals through their own acts of past life experience sufferings, God has merely created the law of action. The evil can be avoided by acting in a good way. We shall get the result at the proper time. Let us not be worried at the sight of the evil. The world would have been a monotonous place to live in, if there would not have been both good and bad, sweet and sour, pleasant and unpleasant. Human freedom too has some meaning when there are two paths open before every individual. If there is only one path, what is the meaning of freedom ? Let every individual choose the path he likes, the path of the sreyas or good or the path of preyas or pleasant. Let us imagine what would have been our plight if there would have been no night?

Hence, let us not be perturbed by the sight of the evil. God expects us to fight the evil to the best of our ability. God Himself incarnates on earth when the evil tries to smash the good. Not only this, it has been stated very explicitly that truth alone becomes victorious, and not the evil or falsehood. But the battle between the two is fierce and shall go on till an individual is able to exceed his ego and transcend the material world. Let us not consider and say. 'I am meek', 'I am bad', 'I am miserable' or 'I am pleased'. 'I am good', 'I am wealthy', 'I am powrful'. These are all egolistic statements. I must say to myself 'I am the Atman', 'I am the Brahman'. We should not think that this attitude means bcoming hard hearted towards those who suffer. We should all try to alleviate their suffering to the best of our ability, because ultimately they are the forms of the Brahman



alone and not different from my real being. This is the only way of solving the problem of evil.

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# 12

# Miracle

Indian religion accepts a possibility of a miracle, if God's help is invoked with deep earnestness. God is omnipotent. There-is nothing which He cannot do for His devotees. The dumb can begin talking, and a disabled person who cannot walk can reach the highest peak of a mountain, if God's favour is obtained. A person who is suffering with an incurable disease can become healthy, a person who has been declared to be dead can become alive, a person having absolute poverty can become a multi-millioner, if God's grace is secured. There is nothing in this world which cannot be had with the grace of God. This is the faith of a religious soul. Books have been written about the miracles of Satya Sai Baba even in the modern period. John Locke had written in his book Discourse on Miracles:

> "He who comes with a message from God to be delivered to the world cannot be refused belief if he vouches his mission by a miracle."

This faith in a miracle is so deep-rooted even in these days of high scientific advances that even now a clergy of Roman Catholic Church has to take the following oath:

> "Secondly, I accept and acknowledge the external proofs of revelation that is divine acts and especially



> miracles and prophesies as the surest signs of the divine origin of Christian religion and I hold that these same proofs are well-adapted to the understanding of all men, even of this time." The Siva-mahimna- Stortra states "O Great Lord, is there any good thing that cannot be obtained through yours prayer?"
>
> (na kasya unnatyai bhavati sirasatvyyavanatinh - xiii)

But there are many persons who shall not accept the possibility of any miracle. For example, David Hume stated that 'a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature' and therefore it is impossible. He has categorically decalred "that no testimony for any kind of miracle has ever amounted to a probability, much less to a proof." Now, let us try to find out the truth about the matter. The Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary states that by a miracle is meant 'a supernatural event'. Therefore, the term miracle means anything that cannot be understood through normal natural ways.

In this context, we shall have to accept that we should not try to think that our modern science is capable of understanding every secret of nature. Science itself is progressing from error to 'truth'. Einstein has proved that Newton's theory was wrong while Newton used to think that his predecessors in the domain of science were accepting a wrong thoery. There was a time when causal theory was accepted as the sole truth. Now, they have come to realize that it is not so, and hence have suggested a theory of probability. This does not mean that we intend to under- estimate the contribution of science. We only want to point out that we must be able to accept that there may be some divine law operating in the universe, which our ordinary scientific device is unable to understand. The term miracle itself means that there are things which cannot be explained through usual scientific methods and formulae. A miracle is opposed on the plea that anything which can be understood only some cannot be accepted as true.

People think that a miracle is impossible because it is not a matter of universal experience. But this in itself cannot be

called a very reasonable attitude. Validity of any thing must depend primarily on the experience of an individual. Copernicus raised his lone voice against the common opinion that the sun revolves around the earth. People of his time did not believe it. But afterwards it became evident that he was right. Hence, we must accept that an experience of even one man may be sufficient for the validity of any principle. For example, there is an old mother whose baby is seriously ill. Doctors declare that he cannot survive. But she prays to God, and the baby is cured. She feels that it is a miracle. Thus, miracle can happen even if a big majority of people refuse to accept it as true. Hence, we can conclude that a miracle is not impossible because of two reasons - first, nature has not revealed her all the secrets to science; hence merely because our knowledge of science cannot accept anything, it does not cease to be true. Second, for a miracle, it is not necessary that every person in the world must accept it. Even if a single person genuinely feels its validity, it cannot be called untrue. Is it not queer that simply because I have no opportunity to have the experience that a person of faith had, I refuse to believe its. H.H. Farmer has rightly stated:

"The fatal mistake is to begin the consideration of miracle from the angle of a scientific or philosophic concept of natural law. Miracle being fundamentally a religious category and not a scientific or philosophic one, the proper place to begin is within the sphere of living religion itself."[1]

As I have stated herein above, no body knows that nature works in exactly the same way in which we consider it to act through laws known to us. Is it not possible that the nature may be acting in a way other than known to us so far? Modern science tells us that mind (brain) is the product of matter. If this view is correct, then our mind should think about material things alone and not about God, soul or immortality. But we cannot deny that there are many persons who believe in the existence of the self, God and many other things spiritual in nature. Hence every word of science cannot be accepted as true.

Miracle becomes possible only when an individual establishes a very close relationship with God and entertains a faith that God shall definitely solve his problem. A miracle is experienced only in a moment when a person puts complete faith in God and becomes entirely dependent on Him.



Three things are necessary for a miracle:

(1) Presence of a situation in which a person finds himself help less despite all the efforts he makes. Even the best possible human help becomes incapable of improving the situation.

(2) A person turns to God in a sincere manner consciously or unconsciously in this hour of gloom and beseeches Him to help him as the divine help is the only solution of the problem.

(3) The solution of the problem and the rise of sense of utter gratefulness to God.

Dale Carnegie has given many examples in his book to show that many persons could get health and safely by God's grace. Testimony of these people is an indication that miracles are not impossible.

Even modern psychology tells us that man's psychic power can yield wonderful results. Faith has immense potentiality. Many diseases have been cured through faith therapy, which has proved more powerful than any usual medical treatment. Miracles are wrought by faith, and they can be experienced only by persons who have that deep faith. Even a Scientist is moved by his faith in his methodology. It is true that miracles do not take place every day. But it is not impossible that they may take place at times depending on the density of faith and the pecularity of circumstances of a particular person. Miracles are not il-logical. They are supra logical. Human mind is still far from the stage of achieving omniscience. Hence to dismiss a miracle wroght by faith as non-sense is to be going beyond the frontiers of rationality. Gajendra states in the Bhagavata that the God is capable of doing even those things which appear to be miraculous to us.[3]

This universe itself is a miracle. The Infinite appears as a finite. Aurbindo writes:

"A miracle of the Absolute was born,
Infinity put on a finite soul,
All ocean lived within a wandering drop,
A time-made body housed the Illimitable."

We should not forget that what is a miracle to a person alien to faith is an ordinary thing for a man of faith. Even if we think that miracles are impossible, we cannot deny the depth of faith of a person of religion who thinks that they are possible and because of which he is able to lead a life free from anxieties and troubles. Hence, it is better to think that a miracle is relative to the faith of a person and if he experiences it, it is certainly a fact for him, because there is no better testimony of the existence of a thing than an experience there of.

The Yoga philosophy clearly states that by the practice of Astanga Yoga, a person can obtain supra-normal powers. A Yogi can tame all creatures including ferocious animals, get any object by the mere wish of it, know directly the past, present and future, produce supernatural sights, sounds and smells, and see subtle entities, angles and gods. He can see through closed doors, pass through stone walls, disappear from sight, appear at different places at the same time, and do such other feats.[5]

The law of cause and effect, as known to the world of science, does not operate once meditation upon a particular object or concept is fixed. Such powers as clairvoyance, clairaudience, thought-reading, telepathy are child's play for a Yogi. He can walk on water or fire. He can do many wonderful things. But a really religious person does not use these powers for his selfish purposes.

The Bible tells us that Christ performed many miracles e.g. walking on water, turning water into wine, healing the sick, raising the dead etc. Any person can develop such powers, if he makes a sincere effort to develop them. Hence, there is nothing secret about them. To comprehend the Yogic powers one must oneself be a Yogi to an extent, just as to understand a demonstration in physics, one must be already a scientist Miracles are therefore always possible.



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For a man of Dharma these powers have no attraction because they are obstructions in the path of attainment of spiritual aim. In this context is the following story that Sri Ramakrsna used to narrate: "There were two brothers. One of them withdrew from the world in his search for truth. After twelve years of struggle and self-denial, he returned to his brother, who then asked him 'What have you gained in these years of austerity?' 'Come and I will show you,' answered the first brother. They came to a river bank, and the Yogi brother crossed the river by walking on the water. The lay brother called for a boat, paid the boat man a copper, and was ferried across. Then he said, 'Brother, is this all you have gained in twelve long years of struggle - to be able to do something that can be had for the price of a copper piece?'"
Hence, the miraculous powers like anima, mahima, laghima, praptih, prakamya, death only at one's will, entering other's body etc. have no value so far as the spiritual advancement is concerned.

# 13

# Finale

The previous pages must have given the readers an idea about the basic nature of dharma. It must have become clear that dharma is not a matter of outward behaviour or rituals. It implies a total transformation of an individual internally as well as externally. If there is a duality between internal feeling and outward conduct, one can say that there is no presence of dharma. The following traits mark dharma and distinguish it from popular religion.

1. The very objective of religion (dharma) is to realize the Supreme. This supreme truth is the sole truth of the universe. It is indefinable and unknowable in the sense that one cannot offer any adequate description of the Real in human language. And yet one cannot desist from making an attempt to describe its glory because mind feels joy in giving an expression to its internal experience irrespective of the inadequacy of language. Just as bird tries to soar in the sky even though the latter being infinite cannot be touched, in the same way man tries to describe his experienc of the Real.[1] Just as the flow of the Ganges seeks confluence of the sea, in the same way an individual seeks a meeting with the Supreme.[2]



2. It is clear to every follower of dharma that the Supreme is infinite. People try to describe it in the light of their individual liking.[3] It has innumerable names. Every worshipper is free to give it a name of his liking. Rama, Krishna, God, Allah or any other name given to God is justified because in fact that Supreme has no name, no description. To quarrel about the ways of worship is a proof of one's ignorance about the nature of Real. A man of religion being acquainted with the indefinable and indescribable nature of the Real is simply grieved at the folly of the people who indulge in conflict in the name of God or in the name of the way of worship. As their dispute is illfounded, a man of dharma never indulges in any disputation with them Unwilling and dogmatic fools can never be convinced.[4] Those, who think that by converting a person in their creed can please God, live in fools' paradise. On the other hand, every person who lures, forces or helps in the act of conversion, drags himself in the mire of spiritual ignorance.

3. It is alright in the beginning to start the worship of God by visiting temples, mosques, churches etc. or by going on pilgrimage of one's faith or by paying respects to scriptures etc., but one must proceed further and try to see God in one's heart. From external worship to internal realization extends the road of worship. But one must move from gross to the subtle, from aids of worship to aidless worship. This is a natural law of spiritual maturity. One cannot put on the clothes of one's childhood even when one becomes an adult. It is good to begin religious journey through external objects. But if one tries to stick at that point, it implies that one is doomed. Progress always proceeds from the lower to the higher. If one refuses to move on, one exhibits one's incapacity to think clearly, one's inability to move in the direction of spiritual insight.

4. Idol worship has its utility. Those who condemn

idol- worship fail to understand the logic behind it. It is not possible for any one to love an abstract God. The milk-maids of Vrija loved God in the form of Srikrisna, who was beauty incarnate. Uddhava approached them to teach them that Krishna is Brahman and Brahman is free from every form and shape. He is omnipresent and therefore the milk-maids were wrong in thinking that Krishna had left them. The reply of the milk-maid was 'How is it possible to love any being totally free from form, complextion, etc. ?' in religion devotion is the most important factor and devotion can usually spring up only when there is some concrete reality present. If the Real is enchanting and beautiful attachment becomes all the more spontaneous.

That is why Dharma recommends a form of the Real which is more beautiful than the cupid (manmath-manmathah). Rama and Krisna are very attractive in figure. They are the fountain-heads of bauty. Rama is so beautiful that the citizens of Janakapuri could not move their eyes from His beauty.[5] Krisna is so beautiful that the women of Mathura took Him in their hearts through their eyes and embraced His body of bliss.[6] His face, His speech, His eyes, His laughter, His heart, His gait...everything is extremely sweet.[7] No effort is needed to love this God. Mind becomes spontaneously attached to this God.

If God is everything, is He not beauty too? What is the harm in thinking and worshipping this enchantingly beautiful God ? There are religions which have no place for an embodied God. But even in these religious like islam and Christianity, the God has been considered to be very Dear by the mystics. And the non-mystics of these religion consider their prophets as their dear and near, and love their places of worship. Human heart needs an object of love and this object of love is mostly concrete.

"Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare
And beauty draws us with a single hair."

Keats decalres



"Beauty is truth, truth is beauty-that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

It is a notable aspect of Dharma that it gives due importance to beauty even in the worship of God. Idol is a symbol of God. Gradually a worshipper attains the stage where prop of the worship of the embodied is no longer needeed. Dharma gives every person liberty to worship God in any manner i.e. in the way of husband, a friend, a brother, a parent, a charmer of heart. It is love for the divine that counts. This love purifies the heart of a worshipper and makes it free from the traces of selfishness and mundane depravity of every kind. They are losers who cannot begin their journey towards God-realization in the manner approved by Dharma. The qualities ascribed to God by Christianity and Islam like kindness, strength, omnipotence etc. can belong only to the embodied God. In the abstract God these qualities cannot exist. Love is that silken ladder that can take a worshipper to the very being of God and merge the individual being in the God's being.[8]

The way of Dharma is the way approved by the facts and principles of human psychology. It is not even logically possible for a limited being to reach the Absolute through a jump. Saguna (the embodied God) is needed even as a dialectical truth.

And even this embodied God can be worshipped only through an idol in the beginning. The only precaution to be observed is that an idol may differ from man to man in accordance with his temperament and taste. It is also to be remembered that idol- worship is not the ultimate end. Ultimate end is to attain the Supreme.[9]

5. Dharma does not imply any abandonment of family and social duties. What is required is the fact that there should not be any attachment to the fruit of an act, because it is not given to a man to command the result of an act done. Moreover, such acts should be free from the traces of pride, self-aggrandisement etc.. And when there is a conflict between duties, the highest duty should be preferred. Dhar-

ma ordains that let every act be done for God so that no impurity of any kind may creep into an act.

A man of Dharma is a very active person. But he does not act out of any selfish motive. Every act done by him is a worship of God.[10] Dharma implies not only internal love for the Supreme, it also implies a conduct that mirrors the inner state of mind and heart. Duality of feeling and acting is not sanctioned by Dharma.

6. There are two aspects of Dharma-one thought aspect and the other conduct aspect.

The thought aspect is very important. If this aspect of Dharma is not understood properly, the entire significance of Dharma shall be lost.

That is why the Bhagavadgita tells us that the knowledge of the Supreme is the foremost knowledge (Brahma-vidya vidyayam). The Upanishads declare that only knowledge can lead to liberation (rte jnanat na muktih) Religion and philosophy are eager to understand the nature of the Real and their propounders and founders were equally keen to colour their life in the light of the truth discovered by them. Philosophy not only tried to seek the ultimate nature of the truth, it also tried to show the way to realize that truth. Indian philosophy has been generally divided in two classes-orthodox and heterodox. Charvaka, Jaina and the Buddha systems are considered heterodox, while Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and the Vedanta are supposed to be orthodox. But if we think rather deeply, we find that they constitute a hierarchy of opinions about the Real. If we begin from the Charvaka according to which material world alone is real and the concepts of soul and God unreal, we can gradually rise to Jaina thought, Buddhist thought, Nyaya-Vaisesika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and in the Vedanta according to which Brahman (Absolute) alone is Real. This order denotes a gradual rise of speculative thought. It also denotes that every type of philosophical speculation found its way in India. However, it was discovered ultimately that there is only one sole reality that was given the name of the Brahman or the Atman. The term



Brahman implies the highest or the biggest reality considered from the stand-point of the universe, the term Atman implies the supreme truth considered from the stand-point of internal being. It was realised that both are one. The Real is Being, Consciousness and bliss (satcidananda). It is also considered to be truth, knowledge and infinity (satyam, jnanam, anantam). Although, the Real is abstract, yet It is embodied (saguna) too. The entire universe is Its cration by way of Play (Lila).

The Taittiriya Upanisad states that the Real is that "from which these beings are born, that by which they live and that into which when departing, they enter" It has been expressly stated "He is the God who is in fire, in water, who pervades the entire universe; He who is in plants, in trees, to Him we make our obeisance again and again."[11] Svetasvatara proclaims "He, who is one and without any colour, by the manifold wielding of His power, ordains many colours (forms) with a concealed purpose and into whom, in the beginning and the end, the universe dissolves, He is the God.[12]

Supreme in its absolute self-existence is Brahman, and as the Lord and Creator, is Cod (Isvara). The Bhagavata informs us that one non-dual Real is known as the Brahman, as the Paramatma and as Bhagavana.[13] It is the attitude with which we visualize the Real that makes the Real as appearing different, but in reality there is the existence of one non-dual Real alone.

This very Real appears as personal God too. He creates the universe by His nature (prakriti). He is the controller and maintainer of universe besides being its originator and destroyer. As originator He is known as the Brahma, as sustainer, He is known as Vishnu, and as destroyer, He is known as Siva. To an ignorant mind, Brahma, Visnu and Mahesh may appear different, but to an enlightened mind all these three are one. The supreme is known as Brahma, when He is the creator of the universe, He is known as Vishnu when the maintenance and the sustenance of the universe is concerned, and He is known as Mahesh when the destruction of the universe is concerned. But even destruction is meant

for the welfare. That is why Mahesh is also known as Siva, the benefactor.

It should not be forgotten that from the stand-point of the ultimate truth, the entire universe is the Lila (divine play) of the Supreme. The Player, the Play-ground, The Play-every-thing is He. But generally people cannot grasp this truth so easily. The truth can be attained only gradually. God is not in hurry. The play must go on. Hence, there is no harm even if a person thinks that the world has been really created and it is real to all intents and purposes. However, a created being is more concerned about his maintenance of existence-his worldly welfare. That is why the Vishnu is more worshipped.

Vishnu is solely concerned about the protection of the created and for this purposes even takes re-incarnation. Wherever there is an increase of evil, Vishnu takes birth to see that good is not eliminated. World needs both good and evil for its activity. That is why it has been accepted by the Indian mind that the world is the product of three gunas, constituents viz. Satva, Rajas and the Tamas. The Satva and the Tamas are contradictory like good ad evil. The Rajas makes them both active.

This world owes its existence to activity, dynamism. Man must realize that he is free to choose either good or evil, either sreyas or preyas. Sreyas leads to happiness, preyas leads to temporary sensual pleasure which is responsible for conflicts. Nobody can be neutral in this conflict. Even reluctant Arjuna has to participate in this battle because activity is life. An individual is condemned to be active. If a person is not active on the physical plane, he is active on the mental plane.

A person who woos good need not feel disheartened at the strength of evil because God himself stands behind in the good and is always willing to participate on behalf of good through incarnation whenever the situation demands it.

The presence of evil need not irk us. Good can judge its strength only in the presence of evil. If there is no evil, what is the value of good? Hence, it is better to concentrate our efforts on the fight with evil then think all the while as to why



evil exists in this world. Buddha that is why, asked people to follow the path of morality rather than waste time on questions like whether God does exist or the self has any reality or when was universe created or how was it created. Our conduct is more important than idle thinking.

But so far as the persons having faith in God are concerned, they should never think that God is indifferent to their well-being. The theory of Avatara indicates that God is a vigilant saviour of mankind in the dark hours of any grave threat to human values. Avatara is a descent of God to human level to inspire people to rise to the level of divinity. Only through such inspiration it is possible for man to rise to the level of God (liberation). Man's predicament is not because of any defect of the world, it is solely because of his ignorance of latent divinity. Dharma is an effort to regain one's lost divinity. Evil springs from estrangement to divinity. God helps man in his self-effort in the right direction. God also helps when one chooses to become His instrument. God's grace is always available like air and water. However, God never interferes in the liberty of man.

This fact is evident from Arjuna's case. The Lord narrated the entire Bhagvadgita to him, but in the end added that the former was free to choose his course of action despite the teaching.

The question of evil in the universe is not so inexplicable as it is supposed to be. In fact whatever is an obstacle in the attainment of man's forgotton divinity is bad and whatever is helpful in it is good. Evil implies that one's distance from infinity and divinity is in the increase, good implies that one's distance from forgotton divinity is in the decrease. Dharma is a process of attaining divinity. A-dharma is a process of deviating from divinity. After realizing 'I am Brahman' 'I am the Infinite' there is no further need of any religious endeavour. Swami Vevikananda sings in his 'The song of the Sanyasin'.

> 'There is but One-The Free-The Knower-Self
> Without a name, without a form or stain.
>
> In Him is Maya, dreaming all this dream.

The Witness, He appears as nature, soul.
Know thou art That, Sanyasin bold
Say - 'Om Tat Sat, Om'
............
Thus, day by day, till Karma's powers spent
Release the soul for ever. No more is birth,
Nor I, nor thou, nor God, nor man. The 'I'
Has All become, the All is 'I' and Bliss.
Know thou art That, Sanyasin bold
Say- 'Om Tat Sat, Om'
Dharma is an attempt of regaining one's real 'I'-ness.

But it is never forgotten that this is the ultimate stage which can be realized only gradually.

A beginning may be made by conceiving God in an idol or in a temple or in a mosque or in a church or by worshipping any prophet or anything that may attract a worshipper's mind and catch his heart. One may practice penance or recite any scriptures. Indeed there are many ways (bahudwarasya dharmasya nehasti viphala kriya).

But this fact should be properly understood that the Supreme is non-dual and His nature is difficult to comprehend because He is infinite. The enlightened worshipper therefore just worships God of his liking i.e. he conceives God in the way he likes. He says

'O Lord of the universe, I do not know your secret. Whatever may be thy nature in reality, I bow before thee.

'tava tatvam na janami kidrso si mahesvara
yadrso si mahadeva dadrsaya namo namah.

Persons have different tendencies and therefore prefer to follow a straight or croocked path. But they all seek The Supreme just as all rivers seek ocean alone.

(rucinam vaicitrad rjukutilnanapath jusam
nrnameko gamyastvamasi payasarnava iva)

Liberty to worship in any way is the hall mark of Dharma. Bhagavadgita proclaims this fact.[14] It also states that the realization of the fact that everything is God dawns after great spiritual effort.[15]



The Gita even enjoins that one should not try to confuse the mind of a lay man. The learned person is he who understands this fact.[16] Let everybody find his own way to reach the Real. One must realize that one's own self is one's friend or enemy. It is wrong to forget it.[17] This absolute liberty to everybody in the realm of religion makes Dharma a universal (vaisva) and eternal (sanatana). That is why Dharma is known as eternal religion.

Do we find find this liberalness in any other institutional religion? If an analysis of faith is attempted, we find three types-Satvika, Rajasa and Tamasa. People of Tamasic faith have faith in spirits and goblins. People of Rajasika faith have faith in ritualistic religion. But people of Satvika faith have an insight in the real nature of the Real. They realize this truth that the Supreme is only non-dual. There is no multiplicity or duality. (neha nanasti kimcana).

But nobody can change one's faith through any ceremonial conversion. Progress of faith in higher dimensions takes place gradually and through inner understanding. Hence, religious conversion merely increases ignorant heads of the followers of a religion i.e. a sect. It has no spiritual significance. God can never be pleased with a person who does not allow a person to have his inner growth and forces anything on him. Earthly considerations mislead persons and estrange them from real spiritual growth. One man of Dharma can bring light to the earth like a Christ or a Gandhi, while the innumerable heads lacking spiritual light can bring only misery to mankind.

Dharma thus caters to the spiritual heights of all persons-from the spiritual dwarfs to spiritual giants leaving it to the individuals to understand the statements in the light of their spiritual positions. For this purpose the use of a symbolic language is needed. That is why Dharma has very significant symbolic terminology. For example, Rama is both the son of king Dasaratha as well as the pervading Real of the universe. Similarly, Krishna is both son of Vaudeva and Devaki as well as the Supreme who draws every soul towards Itself. Just as a poet writes his poetry and then leaves to its readers to interpret it in the way they like, in the same way

Dharma uses its language leaving it ~~to~~ the readers to understand it in the light of their grasping power. Just as when food in its many varieties is served in a plate to a person, it is upto the latter to choose the item he likes, in the same way Dharma leaves scope for every type of intelligence to understand it in any way. Liberty in the domain of spiritual progress is an irrepressible necessity.

Those who lack spiritual insight fail to understand this fact and therefore mis-interpret Dharmic symbols in a very ludicrous way, e.g. the Rasa-lila of Krsna is interpreted as the act of licentiousness. They forget that Bhagavata is the meditative language of Vyasa. It is unfortunate that the mis-interpreters fail to understand the entire context and revel in giving ugly interpretations to incidents that contain hidden spiritual teachings.

Let it be made crystal clear that Dharma gives due importance to personal god, conceiving it as the image of the very Supreme. Sometimes this has been described as henotheism.

We may take an illustration. Let us go through the folllwing prayer by Suka in the Bhagavata:

"O thou Lord supreme, I bow down to thee.

For thy sole pleasure and play didst thou bring forth this universe.

Thou art the highest in the highest. Who can sing thine infinite glory?
Thou art the innermost ruler of every heart;
Thy paths are mysterious;
Thy ways are blessed.

Thou dost wipe away all the tears of thy devotees;
Dost thou destroy the wickedness of the wicked.
Thy form is purity itself, and dost thou give purity and Self- knowledge to those who seek thee.

Salutations to thee again and again, O Lord of hosts.
I praise thee, O Lord,
Thou art the strength and support of all thy worshippers;



Thou art manifest in the hearts of all yogis;
The evil-doer findeth thee not.
Thou art one without a second.

Thou dost shine in thine own glory, in thy resplendent, blissful Self.

What sweetness is in thy name,
What joy is thy rememberence.

Those who chant thy holy name, and meditate on thee, become forever free from all evils;
The wise, worshipping thy feet, conquer all fear of life and death;

Thus do they realize thee, thou supreme goal of all true seekers.

Before thee there is no barrier of caste, or race, or creed:
All thy children attain purity through thy holy name.
Calm souls worship thee, knowing that they are one with thee.

Thou art the Lord supreme,
Thou art indeed the Vedas,
Thou art the Truth,
Thou art the goal of all discipline;
Thy lovers meditate on thy blissful form, and become lost in the joy thereof.

Shower thy grace upon me, O Lord, and in thy mercy look upon me.

Thou art the Lord of wealth,
Thou art the Lord of all creation,
The Lord of all thy lovers and devotees.
Look upon all beings with thy mercy.

Blessed are they that meditate on thy Lotus Feet,
For they shall be purified;
For they shall attain Self-knowledge.
The wise call thee the impersonal, without attributes;
They also call thee the personal God with divine attributes;
Thou art both, and thou dost manifest thyself as the

one or the other,
According to our understanding.

O Lord, forever look in mercy upon me.

We may give our attention to the following prayer of Sri Caitanya, the great devotee:

"Chant the name of the Lord and His glory unceasingly
That the mirror of the heart may be wiped clean
And quench that mighty forest fire,
Worldly lust, raging fururiously within.

Oh name, stream down in moonlight on the lotus-heart,
Opening its cup of knowledge of Thyself.
Oh self, drown deep in the waves of His bliss,
Chanting His name continually,
Tasting His nectar at every step,
Bathing in His Name, that bath for weary souls.

Various are Thy Names, Oh Lord;
In each and every Name Thy power resides.
No times are set, no rites are needed, for chanting of Thy Name,
So vast is Thy mercy.

How huge, then, is my wretchedness
Who find, in this empty life and heart,
No devotion to Thy name.

Oh my mind,
Be humble than a blade of grass,
Be patient and forbearing like the tree,
Take no honour to thyself,
Give honour to all,
Chant unceasingly the Name of the Lord.

Oh Lord and Soul of the Universe,
Mine is no prayer for wealth or retinue.
The playthings of lust or the toys of fame;
As many times as I may be reborn
Grant me, Oh Lord, a steadfast love for Thee.

A drowning man in this world's fearful ocean



Is Thy servant, Oh Sweet One.

In Thy mercy
Consider him as dust beneath Thy feet.

Oh, how I long for the day
When, in chanting Thy Name, the tears will spill down

From my eyes, and my throat will refuse to utter
In prayers, choking and stammering with ecstasy,
When all the hair of my body will stand erect with joy.

Ah, how I long for the day
When an instant's separation from Thee, Oh Givinda,
Will be as a thousand years,
When my heart burns away with its desire
And the world, without Thee, is a heartless void.

Prostrate at Thy feet let me be, in unwavering devotion,
Neither imploring the embrace of Thine arms
Nor bewailing the withdrawal of Thy presence
Though it tears my soul asunder.
Oh Thou, who stealest the hearts of Thy devotees,
Do with we what Thou wilt
For Thou art my heart's Beloved, Thou and Thou alone.

How long the Personal God is needed? The following words of Sri Ramakrishna reveal the fact:

"So long as there is a little ego left, the consciousness that I am a devotee, God is comprehended as personal, and his form is realized. The consciousness of a separate ego is a barrier that keeps one at a distance from the highest realization. The forms of Kali or of Krsna are representated as of a dark-blue colour. Why? Because the devotee has not yet approached them. At a distance the water of a lake appears blue, but when you come nearer, you find it has no colour. In the same way, to him who attains to the highest truth and experience, Brahman is absolute and impersonal. His real nature cannot be defined in words."[18]

Dharma is thus a way of realizing the Supreme gradually. There is no haste, no impatience. Once a person starts in the search of the Real, he shall reach his destination provided he is allowed to march straight in the right direction. Sects act as barriers in this path. But Dharma gives the inspiration to continue the march in the right direction.

Dharma has room for personal God of one's liking. The story of Tulsidas may be mentioned here in this context. He visited a temple of Krsna and wished that the idol of Krsna should assume the form of Rama and should have bow and arrow in its hands rather than a flute, and the idol assumed the form of Rama as wished by Tulsidas. This incident shows that the formless God can take any form if the worshipper is sincere and honest in his devotion.

Sri Ramakrsna rightly declared

> "Brahman, absolute existence, knowledge and bliss, may be compared to an infinite to ocean, without beginning or end. As through intense cold some portions of the water of the ocean freeze into ice, and the formless water appears as having form, so through intense love of the devotee the formless, absolute, infinite existence manifests himself before him as having form and personality. But forms and aspects disappear before the man who reaches the highest samadhi, who attains the height of non- dualistic philosophy, the Vedanta."[19]

The Lord declares in the Bhagavadgita

Whatever path men travel
Is my path:
No matter where they walk
It leads to Me. (IV.11)

Dharma gives a person a security born from a deep faith in personal God that makes life free from worries and anxities and infuses confidence and ultimately leads to liberation that comes with the realization of Brahmahood. The real nature of Dharma has been expressed by Swami Vivekananda in following words:

> "Do not depend on doctrines, do not depend on dogmas, or sects, or churches, or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in man, which is divine; and the more this divinity is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that spirituality first, acquire that, and criticize no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show by your lives that religion does not mean words or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual realization. Only those can understand who have perceived the Reality. Only those who have attained to spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light.[20]



7. Apart from this sound thought aspect of Dharma, the latter has its conduct aspect too. In fact Dharma not practiced in actual conduct is as good as A-dharma (irreligion). Dharma is considered to be based on conduct too. If a person is well-versed in the thought aspect of Dharma but his actual conduct is not to the mark, he is not better than a dunkey carrying a load of Vedas on his back but untouched by their teaching. That is why supreme importance is attached to conduct. The Bhagavadgita attaches so much importance to ideal conduct that it has devoted one full chapter to the discussion of divine (daivi) and undivine (asuri) qualities. A man of Dharma possesse daivi gunas like absence of anger (a-krodha), a desire for the welfare of others (mangalya), liberalness (a-karpanya), absence of worldly ambitions which are responsible for the social conflicts (a-spraha), charitable nature (dana), working for the upliftment of one and all (hitavadita), self-study of spiritual works (svadhyaya), absence of pride (a-dambha), a feeling of friendliness towards all (maitri), modesty (vinamrata), non-violence (ahimsa), a spirit of non-possession of worldly comforts (a-parigraha), mastery over sex-desires (brahmacharya), penance (tapa), forgiveness (kshama), cleanliness of body and mind (sauca) etc. It is but proper that an individual should begin his pilgrimage towards a complete spiritual life from the

position where he stands. But a constant effort to rise further ad further in the march is very necessary.

The Yoga system of phiosophy has solely devoted itself towards an analysis of the limbs of Yoga i.e. the state of union with the Real. They are abstention from evil-doing (yama), the various observances (niyama), postures (asana), control of the prana (pranayama), withdrawal of the mind from sense objects (pratyahara-, concentration (dharana), meditation (dhyana, and absorption in the Real (samadhi). The aim is the realization of the Real.

The words of Vivekananda remind us about this very fact.

"Realization is real region; all the rest is only preparation. hearing lectures, or reading books, or reasoning, is merely preparing the ground; it is not religion. Intellectual assent and intellectual dissent are not religion."[21]

Buddha also gave the eightfold path for the realization of spiritual ideal. It consists of right faith, right aspiration, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right contemplation. Tevija Sutta proclaims:

'...Putting away the murder of that which lives, (the aspirant) abstains from destroying life...he is compassionate and kind to all..

'Putting away the theft of that which is not his, he abstains from taking anything not given. He takes only what is given; therewith is he content, and he poasses his life in honesty and in purity of heart..

'Putting away lying, he abstains from speaking falsehood. He speaks truth, from the truth he never swerves; faithful and trustworthy, he injures not his fellow man by deceit...

'Putting away slander, he abstains from columny. What he hears here he repeats not elsewhere to raise a quarrel against the people here; what he hears elsewhere he repeats not here to raise a quarrel against the people there. Thus he lives as binder together of those who are divided, an encourager of those who are



friends, a peacemaker, a lover of peace, impassioned for peace, a speaker of words that make for peace...

'Putting away bitterness of speech, he abstains from harsh language. Whatever word is humane, pleasant to the ear, lovely, reacing to the heart, urbane, pleasing to the people, beloved of the people-such are the words he speaks...

'Putting away foolish task, he abstains from vain conversation. In season he speaks; he speaks that which is; he speaks facts; ... he speaks, and at the right time, that redounds to profit, is well-grounded, is well-defined, and is full of wisdom.

The Bhagavadgita has analysed the paths of God-realization in the light of human psychology. It is accepted that every individual is unique yet broadly speaking there are three ways viz. the way of knowledge, the way of devotion and the way of action. If followed sincerely, every path can lead to the destination. We need not expect everybody to follow one single path, because temperamentally people differ. Dharma, as per the Gita, does not quarrel about the way. On the otherhand, it inspires every person to follow the way that suits his temperament so that he may get his spiritual destination.

But even after granting every seeker of spirituality his freedom to choose the pathway of his liking, the fact remains that most of people like to attain God through devotion alone, because it gives due freedom to human emotions and sentiments like love-love of many shades dimension.

The spirit of devotion has been succinctly expressed by the Gita in the following words

Whatever your action,
Food or worship;
Whatever the gift
That you give to another;
Whatever you vow
To the work of the spirit;
O son of Kunti,
Lay these also
As offerings before Me.'[22]

The divine assurance is there to gladden the heart of any man.

Though a men be soiled
With the sins of a lifetime,
Let him but love me,
Rightly resolved,
In utter devotion;
I see no sinner,
That man is holy.'

Holiness soon
Shall refashion his nature
To peace eternal;
O son of Kunti,
Of this be certain:
The man that loves me,
He shall not perish.'[23]

Dedication is the soul of devotion. If one can dedicate oneself wholly to the Lord, there is nothing more to be done. Krishna declares it in a very loud manner so that everybody may understand this fact and the possibility of any doubt in this context becomes impossible:

Give me your whole heart,
Love and adore me,
Worship me always,
Bow to me only,
And you shall find me:
This is my promise
Who love you dearly.

Lay down all duties
In me, your refuge.
Fear no longer,
For I will save you
From sin and from bondage.[24]

Thus, Dharma gives every individual every freedom to worship God in a way that suits his heart. There is no intoleration of anykind. Only sects are intolerant; real religion shuns every kind of intoleration in the domain of worship. Spirit of Dharma consists in its unifying attitude, its sustaining power. Dharma sees inner unity in the apparent diversity. The Gopikas of Vrja saw Krishna everywhere.



This unifying tendency makes Dharma a spiritual religion and not a temporal sect that makes distinctions of Hindus and Muslims, or follower of one sect or the other. History informs us about the various wars and conflicts waged in the name of non-spiritual religion. But such a sect that divides humanity cannot be acceptable to Dharma. This spirit of toleration springs from the firm conviction that the Real is only one and non-dual and entire universe is merely a play of the Supreme.

Worldly activities, however, are given due importance by Dharma. Even Samkara, the propounder of non-dualism, has given due importance to the empirical world. He never said that the universe is a dream and is an unreal as a dream is. In fact he makes a distinction between a dream and the world. Dream is unreal and its unreality is evident soon after the waking of an individual experiencing a dream. But the reality of the empirical universe is never ignored by a lover of truth. Even after the highest spiritual experience, the experiencer is advised to bahave outwardly like other person. Of course, there is a change in his mental attitude. He acts, and yet does not act because he does not cling to the act inwardly. And for a devotee the world is merely a divine play of the Real. Nobody can deny the reality of a play as long as it lasts.

## REALITY OF THE WORLD

Sometimes it is pleaded, that Indian spiritual thought is other worldly, and Dharma does not pay any importance to body, life and the world.

But it can be declared that this view is based either on an imporper study of Indian thought or deliberately this wrong notion is associated with Dharma out of some ulterior motive, because philosophically and even from the standpoint of Dharma, we find ample evidence in support of the fact that the world is important, worldly life has its significance and man ought to pay due attention to the fact that

no spiritual end can be realized without making one's conduct ethically good and desirable.

The Chandogya Upanisad declares:

> 'In the beginning there was Existence, one only, without a second. Some say that in the beginning there was non-existence only, and out of that the universe was born. But how could such a thing be ? How could existence be born of non-existence ? No, my son, in the beginning there was Existence alone-one only, without a second. He the One, thought to himself: Let me be many, let me grow forth. Thus, out of himself he projected the universe: he entered intoevery being and every thing. All that is has its self in him alone. He is the truth. He is the subtle essence of all. He is the Self. And that, Svetaketu, That art Thou'

The Isa Upanisad states 'At the heart of all-whatever there is in the universe-abides the Self.'

The Indian thought gives due importance to the worldly life. In fact it is eager to regulate human life so that it may be able to work with sagacity and enthusiasm. The theory of Sanskaras so much prevalant in Hindu society is pointer in this connection. It is held that man is born a brute; by sanskaras alone he can be given the form of a real human being (janmana jayate sudro, sanskarat dvija ucyate) Every man is twice born. The first birth is given by the parents, and the second birth is given by a teacher, an educator. We come across the names of sanskaras like garbhadhana, punsavana, simantonnayan, jata-karma, nama-karana, niskaramana, annaprasana, cudakarma, yajnopavita, vedarambha, samavartana, vivaha, garhaspatya, vanaprastha sanyasa and antyesthi. Life used to be modelled gradually through every stage of development. At present only birth, marriage and death ceremonies have been retained in the form of sankaras, due to a change of period and attitude.

But it is clear from this description of sanskaras that an endeavour was made to give a brightness to life through these sanskaras. This indicates that life was given due importance.



Not only this, but even a very rational attitude towards marriage was accepted. Eight forms of marriage were accepted viz. brahma, prajapatya, arsa, daiva, gandharva, asara, raksasa and paisaca. It was held that marriage is a sacrament and not just an agreement, because marriage affects the very structure of society and and children. If marriage is considered to be just an agreement, the freedom may degerate into licence and the result may be the suffering of children born of the wedlock but deserted by any parent resulting in the improper mental and physical growth of children. Undeveloped children shall grow into irresponsible adults and may bring havoc in society.

Even festivities were given due importance. Life needs not only food, it also needs entertainment for nourishing mind. Festivals not only are in the interest of individual growth, they also contribute to social cohesion. Dharma has accepted festivals like raksa-bandhan, vijaya-dasami, dipavali and holi to give colour and gaity to human life. Individual life was regulated through a theory of Ashramas too. Life has been divided into four periods like Brahacharya, Grhastha, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa. It is not the place to give their details here. Similarly, soceity was analysed in four groups in the light of individual temperment, taste and work viz. Brahman, Ksatriya, Vaisya and Sundra. It was made amply clear that this classification is meant for bringing efficiency in society and not to divide it. All the four Varnas were expected to work in close co-operation just as cooperate head, hands, stomach and legs to give strength to human body. This theory of Varna did not attach any importance to birth i.e. the parents. The basic thing was the liking and the work of individuals. Vasistha, a great sage was a son of a dancer, Parasara, another great sage was a son of insignificant person. Vyas, the author of the Mahabharata was a son of a fisher woman.

It was also proclaimed that every type of work is important; no work is inferior or superior. The basic thing is the honesty and efficiency with which it is discharged.

But life should not be supposed to consist in the enjoyment of the material life alone. Hence, the theory of four

Purusorthas was put forth viz. Dharma, Artha, Karma and Moksa. One should begin one's life through a cultivation of a sense of duty, then one should proceed to the earning of material wealth for the proper maintenance of life, then one should try to ful fil one's material desires in a sensible manner through the money so earned in a honest manner. But the ultimate objective should be to attain spiritual insight (liberation). Thus, material as well as spiritual values were given the importance they deserve.

The above description is sufficient to establish the fact that life was never neglected or is neglected by Dharma. It only demands a regulation of life for its brilliance and sparkle.

Not only individual life and social life are important, one must give due importance to the universal life. The peace of the whole universe must be looked after because life is one organic whole and what affects one society may sooner or later affect other societies too. It is not possible to think that discontent and conflict prevalent in other parts of the world shall not affect us. Hence, it was taught that we are the sons of mother earth and must care for the welfare of all the people. Not only human beings, but even animals and plants, rivers, mountains forests- all were given the importance they deserve. Peace must prevail in our natural surroundings too.

Dharma is thus directed towards the preservation of the entire being of the universe. Yo vai bhuma tatsukham. The Brhdaranyaka Upanishad proclaims that the Real is Perfect, the universe too is an emanation from that Perfect; hence, this too is Perfect. In fact the unverse is an aspect of the Real-sarvam khalumidam brahma. That is why every lover of Truth must try toserve the enlightened interests of all beings - sarvabhutahi teratah. There is nothing in the universe which is not pervaded by the Real. The Lord declares in the Bagavadgita that there is nothing except Me-mattah paratarum nanvad.

"The aspiration of Dharma may be indicated by saying 'Give me wide walls to build my house of Life-



The North shall be of Love against the winds of hatred;
The South of Tolerance, that I may outreach hate;
The East of Faith, that rises clear and new each day;
The West of Hope, that even dies a glorious way;
The threshold 'neathe my feet shall be Humanity;
The roof-the very sky itself-infinity.
Give me wide walls to build my house of Life.
Dharma aims at building such a house of Life for every sensible man."

Thus, Dharma never neglects life; it merely uplifts life to the highest level. Indeed this level is so high that ordinary person cannot even think about it. The ignorance of this height springs from an average man's incapacity to recognise his spiritual nature. Once the spiritual nature is recognized and imbibed the lost height comes back rather automatically. After reaching that level, almost all the weaknesses of a man disappear, his problems disappear, his agonies disappear. Dharma has a practical objective of helping an individual to regain his lost and foregotten divinity.

Hence, it is wrong to think that Dharma is other wordly. On the other hand, it cares wisely for the real gleam of life.

Dharma tells us that the Supreme is bliss (raso vai sah). The universe in His play (lila). Everybody is expected to play his part in this Play efficiently and joyfully. The Lord plays on His divine Flute that produces a flood of happiness all around us.

So beautiful is Thy Voice
O flute;
Even an echo of this music
Calms the weary heart.

Life is a current, a flow of events internal and external. These events flow just as water of the of the Ganges goes on flowing, dancing and flirting. But our minds give individual interpretations to these events. Some are upset by them, some are enchanted by them, some just witness them in a non-attached way. In themselves the events and circumstances do not bear the meanings that are given to them by in-

dividual minds. From this stand-point every person is a creator of his universe of pleasure or pain, happiness or misery. When the waves of a lovely pond are witnessed by persons, their experiences are not uniform e.g. one person may enjoy the sight, the other person may detest the scene, and the third person may just remain an unmoved witness. The universe is like this pond eliciting different reactions from different persons depending on their individual likings, attitudes and understandings. But a follower of Dharma enjoys the world and considers it all as a Play of the Lord. Objective world is not denied and is in fact accepted as field of play; the participation of the individual too is unavoidable; but the reactions of a follower of Dharma is always constructive. He enjoys the whole affair and puts his heart and soul in the performance, but remains unaffected by the adverse results. Good or bad results belong to the play which is meant for enjoying and not to be disturbed. A disturbed player is an inefficient player. No defeat, no victory; so success or failure is a creation of the mind of a person. His sole concern should be to play the game as wisely and as efficiently as possible, leaving the result to the great Player who plays through individuals and who is the play, the playground and the Player rolled in one. A person who loses heart and hope, is a person who has failed to grasp the importance of Dharma.

It is not implied that there shall be no moments of joy or agony, easiness and difficulty in this Play. But these all are parts of Play just as flowers and leaf, thorns and roses belong to the plants themselves.

The trouble is that the ego of an individual persuades him to attribute the failures and successes to himself. This is just foolish. Is there a person who can command success at his will? Even Alexanders and Hitlers could not do so. The ego is the source of all troubles.

It is clear to a person who is capable of thinking rather deeply that there are many events which are beyond the control of any person. It appears that there is some Power that moves the world in any direction as per Its mighty plan, which is executed through the apparent agency of some per-



sons or societies. A close perusal of history bears a testimony to this fact. Even the mightiest emperors and sages could not undo or shape the things. If the Alexanders and Taimuras have failed, even Buddhas and Christs could not change the world. Hence, it is quite rational to think that everything is not under the sway of individuals or societies however gifted or powerful they may consider themselves to be. This does not mean that individuals should not do their duties. It only means that after doing every effort the result better be left to the Lord.

Dharma persuades persons to dedicate the results of their actions to God, which rightly belong to his sphere. Let every person do his duty and dedicate its fruit to the Lord. This will mean that the real doer is God and man is just his instrument and hence should not be either proud or dejected at the result of his act. He should not allow his petty ego to attribute the results to himself. If ego is so trained or tamed, the prospects of happiness shall become bright. (harsasokau jahati, tarati sokam atmavid) One transends one's finitude in this manner, because the conditions of sorrow and pleasure delimit man's self. Once the states of sorrow and pleausre, elation and dejection are transcended, the limitations are lost for ever. As God is untouched by pleasure and plain, one attains divine condition, divine state, the perfection for which every soul yearns secretly. Dharma does not place God beyond any person's reach. It proclaims that person's perfect being is God and is present in his own self. They can never prove God's existence very logically who like to place God outside the creation in any way, because then God becomes quite unrelated to the universe. If God is so unrelated and unconcerned, it is not desirable to run after Him. The truth is that every soul pines for God as the latter is its perfect being. The most evolved form of being is God and it is present in every person. One's effort consists in making it manifest. Why has God chosen to remain unmanifest ? It is God's play. It is the play of hide and seek. Dharma impels a person to regain his lost perfect being. Once this perfect being is attained and realized, the dualities of human life like pleasure and pain, success and failure, shall disappear and

a state of eternal bliss shall be gained. God is bliss-raso vai sah. Individual, being God in man, too is bliss. However, the knowledge of inner divinity can be gained through a proper sadhana alone. Dharma lays down that plan of sadhana.

The sadhana consists of namaskara, stuti, dedication of actions, seva, puja and always thinking about God. This is an essential feature of devotion. By such devotion and inner reflection (manisa). a person discovers inner divinity. (manisaya niskarsanti mudham) Constant practice (sadhana) ultimately leads to the inner realization that one is the supreme consciousness, the ultimate Reality (cidanandarupah sivibam sivoham). One feels that one is fully non-attached and free (sada samatvam na muktirna bandhah) If one does not rise to the height of this realization, one at least experiences a sense of utter dedication to the Real.[25] Dharma produces a feeling in the heart of a worshipper that everybody should be happy, everybody should be healthy, everyhody should be greeted by auspiciousness and nobody should have any pain or misery of any kind.[26] Not only this, but even peace in the firmament, on earth, and the vegetable world is wished.[27] Thus, Dharma not only leads a person to the highest spiritual attainment, it also leads him as a well-wisher of entire universe.

Dharma is beyond all sects. It does not recognize any distinctions of caste, creed, nationality, colour, sex, education or anything else. It gives new constructive dimensions to man. It ennobles his personality. It transforms his being.

It has been stated very significantly that if human beings shall protect Dharma i.e. follow Dharma sincerely, it will protect them. An ideal community of mankind can be developed only through the cultivation of Dharma.[28]

An important aspect of Dharma is that it is based on enlightened knowledge. Religion based merely on feeling and emotion can sometimes play havoc with human life. We have enough evidence of this fact in the pages of history. Christianity and the Islam when they became unbridled brought much destruction and unhappiness to the people in ancient period. It is therefore desirable that religion.



should not be separated from reason. Dharma has this bright aspect that it gives due respect to reason. The Bhagavadgita declares that devotee is best who is not swayed merely by sentiments and has enlightening knowledge (jnani). According to Vallabha too a real devotee has knowledge about the supremacy of his Lord. Shankara is of the opinion that real devotion purifies heart and paves a way for the rise of real knowledge.

Dharma advocates an enlightened devotion for God and not a blind one. If due care is not taken, a simple devotee may be misled by any pseudo religious teacher. And then such a person may prove to be a problem for any community. Misconduct perpetrated in the garb of religion is more dangerous than even an atom bomb. Hence, no authentic devotion is possible without an enlightened knowledge. Dharma advocates devotion based on an enlightened knowledge alone. That is why Dharma leads a person to the door- steps of real spirituality which is a boon for humanity. The problem of evil is no problem for a person of Dharma, because it is accepted and realized that good is that which leads to God and bad is that which increases distance between a devotee and God. The world is a mixture of good and evil. Without a duel between these two, the freedom of man has no meaning. God does not want to force anything on man. The Lila consists in giving everybody full freedom to walk on the path of spirituality through self- effort.

Tulsidas has declared in his celebrated work Ramacharita - manasa,

> "Is there any person in this world who is not swayed by the three gunas viz. the satva, raja and tama ? Is there any person in this world who is without any pride of some kind ? Is there youth which does not persuade a person to go on wrong path ? Is there any person who is free from attachment ? Is there any person who has no envy ? Is there any person who has no sorrow of any kind ? Is there any person who has no worry of any kind ? Is there any person who has never been attacked by any disease ? Is there any person who is not frustrated due to the non-attain-

ment of desired object ? Is there any person who is not affected by a desire of betterment of his material self, his progeny etc.? Is there any person who has not allowed his mind to walk on undesirable paths?"[29]

Obviously, there is no man who is absolutely free from these human weaknesses which prompt a person to indulge in undesirable acts. This problem of evil is, however, limited to our empirical physical world. When one rises above it, one transcends it, the problems vanish. But it is not easy to go beyond this world. One can succeed only when one follows the path of Dharma.

Dharma leads to attainment of physical prosperity as well as spiritual serenity.

In the dim path of humanity sagacious Veda Vyasa, that is why, had lamented.

"It is indeed surprising that why do people not follow Dharma, when the latter helps even in the attainment of material sources as well as satisfaction of desires ?"[30]

At present when the very existence of man is being threatened by the nuclear weapons and the world has been made small due to the various instruments of communication, the desirability of following the path of Dharma has increased all the more.

A person who has imbibed the spirit of Dharma shall declare like Arjuna "I shall neither feel meek before any adverse circumstances nor shall I flee away from problems".[31] We need such persons of vision and determination to make our human world happy and prosperous. Pursuit of Dharma is thus desirable even from the standpoint of the happiness of the material world.

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   nayanam madhuram hasitam madhuram
   hrdayam madhuram gamanam madhuram
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   bhaktim janah paramahamsagatau labheta
   Prahlada-stuti in the Bhagavata.
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   yo osadhisu yo vanaspatisu tasmai devaya namonamah
   He is the God who is in fire, in water, to Him we make our obeisa
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    na putro na putri na bhrtyo na bharta

na jaya na vidya na vrttirmamaiva
gati stvam gatistvam tvameka bhavani.

brahma to, haun jiva, tu thakura, haun chero
tata mata guru sakha, tu saba vidni hitu mero
tohi mohi nate aneka, maniye jo bhave
jyon tyon 'tulsi' krpalu, carana sarana pave.
aba saupa diya isa jivana ka saba bhara tumhare hathon men
hai jita tumhare hathon men, aura hara tumhare hathon men

26. sarve bhavantu sukhinah sarve santu niramayahah
sarve bhadrani pasyantu ma kascid dukha bhagabhavet.

natvaham kamaye rajyam na svargam napunarbhavam
kamaye dukhataptanam praninamartinasanam

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vanaspatayah santih.....

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# Appendix: Kalidas's Concept of Dharma

Dharma has been given a very prominent importance by Kalidasa, who is the greatest poet of Sanskrit. He enriched Indian literature through his classical works like the Raghuvamsa, Kumara Sambhava, Meghaduta etc. It is in keeping with Indian tradition, because dharma has been accepted as the gateway of material and spiritual progress.[1] Dharma aims at the qualitative improvement of human conduct.[2] Unless one's conduct becomes transformed, one cannot hope to be happy, nor can one's society be prosperous.

Kalidasa is not only one of the greatest poets and dramatists of India, he seems to be well-versed in the study of dharma and culture too. Literature is a reflection of a nation's culture. Hence, we can say that Kalidasa's view about dharma represents India's view about dharma. We should not think that Kalidasa's view was merely a stereotyped view about dharma. Kalidasa was a genius and he accepted anything only after a logical and systematic consideration. He very clearly stated that only a fool is led by the opinion of others.[3] It is thus clear that the concept of dharma found in Kalidasa was an outcome of his cool reflection.

Kalidasa did not decry the different concepts of God, be-

cause he knew that people possess different and divergent likings and aptitudes.[4] This is a fact emerging from a study of human psychology. So far as Kalidasa was concerned, he liked to worship Lord Siva, as the Supreme Reality of the universe. Kalidasa was essentially a poet and therefore perhaps he liked Siva as He is Natraja. He prays Lord Siva in the prologue to the Malavikagnimitra:

> "Though occupying the position of undivided sovereignty over the whole universe - a position which is fruitful of several blessings to the humble and the devout - He is Himself clad in elephant's skin. Although his body is integrated with that of His beloved spouse in a single whole, he stands far above the self- restrained ascetics in the matter of keeping the mind completely free from sensual desires; though sustaining the entire creation with eight forms, he has not a trace of pride in Him. May that Lord dispel the element of darkness from your nature so that you may perceive the right path in the light of pure knowledge."

But Kalidasa was aware of the fact the Lord is the sole truth of the universe. He is in reality the Brahman. That is why he prays in the Sakuntala:

> "May the self-existent, purple-throated God, whose power pervades every where, release me from the interminable chain of birth and death."

Kalidasa makes it clear in his work Kumarasambhavam (IV canto) that Siva is the Supreme Reality which is the author of creation, preservation and the dissolution of the universe and is the governing principle of the creation. In the second canto Brahma states:

> "That God is the self-luminous Supreme Spirit itself that abides permanently beyond all darkness and is outside of all illusive appearances. The extent of his power can neither be measured by me nor by Visnu."

For Kalidasa, Rama, Krshna, Siva all are one from the ontological standpoint. The Real has been described as 'purusam puratanam', 'avyakta' (imperceptible), sarva-



rupa-bhak (appearing in all the forms). It is the same real which the Yogis seek for liberation. Nobody can know its real nature. It is beyond the reach of language and mind. Who can understand Its secret?[5]

Dharma is essentially a matter of faith, because without faith a change in one's conduct is not possible. Hence, some authority which is not inconsistent with reason has to be accepted. Those who rejoice in argumentation alone cannot do justice to dharma.[6]

Dharma gives due importance to the distinctions characterising likings of people. But it emphasizes the point that Supreme Truth is only. One which is conceived in distinct manners by the persons in the light of their individual likings: However, all these paths of worship ultimately reach that One alone, as all the rivers ultimately merge in the ocean alone.[7] Hence, what is needed is that one should be sincere in following the path one follows and should have a spirit of tolerance for the other ways followed by people.

Kalidasa accepts the theory of incarnations. The Supreme Lord takes incarnations whenever there is any situation demanding the intervention of God. Rama, Krsna, Narsimha etc. are such incarnations known to us. Kalidasa, being a poet of beaury and elegance, favours the path of devotion as compared with the path of knowledge. God can be known only through warm-hearted love. There is no need of leading an ascetic life. He states that the body should never be neglected, as it is an instrument of realizing the Supreme.[8] One can never get freedom from cravings and desires for worldly objects through ascetic means, because our impulses cannot be curbed in this manner.[9] They can be sublimated only through devotion. Similarly,he condemns renunciation of action. One should never abandon one's duties. The world should not be discarded. Even God takes incarnations to save it from being ruined by undesirable elements.

Thus, Kalidasa gives us all the essentials of dharma. First, he tells us that dharma consists in loving God from the bottom of one's heart. One should offer the flowers of

one's sentiments to God. Second, dharma is not only a matter of sentiment, it is also a matter of actual conduct. One's behaviour must be transformed. There is no place for envy, selfishness, worldly aspirations etc. in dharma. One's character and conduct should be quite pure. Thirdly, dharma enjoins that one should never disregard one's duties. There is no question of neglecting the world. Fourthly, even though celebrations are not very important from the standpoint of dharma, one need not discard them totally because according to Kalidasa, man is by nature a lover of celebrations.[10] Dharma should enable a person to walk on the path of purity despite temptations.[11] If a person retires to a forest and leads a lonely life, it is not a mark of real dharma. The test of our dharma is that in our daily life too we should not forsake the right path under the pressure of threats or temptations.

Man's superiority over animal's life is found in his ability to exceed his animal nature and in his potentiality to establish a heart-throbbing identity with his inner being, his Lord.

We can sum up Kalidasa's view about dharma by stating that real dharma helps a person in developing the right attitude towards the world, life, society and duties. Dharma should never mean running away from life. It is useless to think that one should cut oneself away from society and the world and retire into forest. A man of dharma fights the battle of life in a heroic but unperturbed manner. The source of trouble lies in one's wrong thinking.Dharma gives a right perspective to deal with the problems of life. Then one is not upset by anything, happiness in life-defeat, victory, insult, praise, failure and success-all are taken in a dispassionate manner. One does not allow oneself to be overwhelmed by any negative thought. One experiences eternal happiness and poise.

This type of view about dharma never becomes irrelevant. Every age and every person need it. Hence, Kalidasa's view of dharma deserves an acceptance even in our period, if we intend to keep individual life happy and society sound and healthy.



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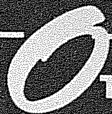

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